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AMERICAN LITERATURE

AMERICAN

LITERATURE

And Other Papers

BY

EDWIN PERCY WHIPPLE

WITH INTRODUCTORY NOTE

BY

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

BOSTON
TICKNOR AND COMPANY
1887

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NOTE.

THANKS are due to Messrs. LITTLE, BROWN, & Co. for their kind permission to use the Essay on "Daniel Webster as a Master of English Style,"— originally prepared as an introduction to their collection of Webster's "Great Speeches and Orations,"—and to the publishers of "Harper's Monthly" and the "North American Review," for the articles reprinted from those publications.

TO

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER,

The People's Poet,

THE LOYAL FRIEND,

WHOSE INNER LIGHT HAS BRIGHTENED MANY LIVES
AND WHOSE FAITH IN THE ETERNAL
ASSURED MANY HEARTS
OF IMMORTALITY.

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INTRODUCTION.

I HAVE been pained to learn of the decease of my friend of many years, EDWIN P. WHIPPLE. Death, however expected, is always something of a surprise, and in his case I was not prepared for it by knowing of any serious failure of his health. With the possible exception of Lowell and Matthew Arnold, he was the ablest critical essayist of his time; and the place he has left will not be readily filled.

Scarcely inferior to Macaulay in brilliance of diction and graphic portraiture, he was freer from prejudice and passion, and more loyal to the truth of fact and history. He was a thoroughly honest man. He wrote with conscience always at his elbow, and never sacrificed his real convictions for the sake of epigram and antithesis. He instinctively took the right side of the questions that came before him for decision, even when by so doing he ranked himself with the unpopular minority. He had the manliest hatred of hypocrisy

and meanness; but if his language had at times the severity of justice, it was never merciless. He "set down naught in malice."

Never blind to faults, he had a quick and sympathetic eye for any real excellence, or evidence of reserved strength in the author under discussion. He was a modest man, sinking his own personality out of sight, and he always seemed to me more interested in the success of others than in his own. Many of his literary contemporaries have had reason to thank him not only for his cordial recognition and generous praise, but for the firm and yet kindly hand which pointed out deficiencies and errors of taste and judgment. As one of those who have found pleasure and profit in his writings in the past, I would gratefully commend them to the generation which survives him. His "Literature of the Age of Elizabeth" is deservedly popular, but there are none of his Essays which will not repay a careful study. "What works of Mr. Baxter shall I read?" asked Boswell of Dr. Johnson. "Read any of them," was the answer, "for they are all good."

He will have an honored place in the history of American literature. But I cannot now dwell upon his

authorship while thinking of him as the beloved member of a literary circle now, alas! sadly broken. I recall the wise, genial companion and faithful friend of nearly half a century, the memory of whose words and acts of kindness moistens my eyes as I write.

It is the inevitable sorrow of age that one's companions must drop away on the right hand and the left with increasing frequency, until we are compelled to ask with Wordsworth, —

"Who next shall fall and disappear?"

But in the case of him who has just passed from us, we have the satisfaction of knowing that his life-work has been well and faithfully done, and that he leaves behind him only friends.

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

DANVERS, 6*th Mo.* 18, 1886.

AMERICAN LITERATURE

AND

OTHER PAPERS.

AMERICAN LITERATURE.

[1776–1876.]

I.

In a retrospect of what has been done in American literature during the past hundred years, it is of the first importance to draw a sharp line of distinction between the mental powers displayed in literature and those which have been exhibited in industrial creation, in statesmanship, and in the abstract and applied sciences. The literature of America is but an insufficient measure of the realized capacities of the American mind. When Sir William Hamilton declared that Aristotle had an imagination as great as that of Homer, he struck at the primary fact that the creative energies of the human mind may be exercised in widely different lines of direction. Imagination is, in the popular mind, obstinately connected with poetry and romance. This prejudice is further deepened by associating imagination with amiable emotions, regardless of the fact that two of the greatest characters

created by the human imagination are two of the vilest types of intelligent nature, — Iago and Mephistopheles. When the attempt is made to extend the application of the creative energy of imagination to business and politics, the sentimental outcry against such a profanation of the term becomes almost deafening. Every poetaster is willing to admit that Newton is one of the few grand scientific discoverers that the world has produced; but he still thinks that, in virtue of versifying some commonplaces of emotion and thought, he is himself superior to Newton in imagination. The truth is that, in spite of Newton's incapacity to appreciate works of literature and art, he possessed a creative imagination of the first class, — an imagination which, in boundless fertility, is second only to Shakspeare's. In fact, it is the direction given to the creative faculty, and not to the materials on which it works, that discriminates between Fulton and Bryant, Whitney and Longfellow, Bigelow and Whittier, Goodyear and Lowell. Descending from the inventors, it would be easy to show that in the conduct of the every-day transactions of life, more quickness of imagination, subtilty and breadth of understanding, and energy of will have been displayed by our men of business than by our authors. By the necessities of our position, the aggregate mind of the country has been exercised in creating the nation as we now find it. There is, indeed, something ludicrous, to a large observer of all the phenomena of our national life, in confounding

the brain and heart of the United States with the manifestation that either has found in mere literary expression. The nation outvalues all its authors, even in respect to those powers which authors are supposed specially to represent. Nobody can write intelligently of the progress of American literature during the past hundred years without looking at American literature as generally subsidiary to the grand movement of the American mind.

It is curious, however, that the only apparent contradiction to this general principle dates from the beginning of our national life. At the time the American Revolution broke out, the two men who best represented the double aspect of the thought of the colonies were Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin. Both come within the domain of the historian of literature, for both were great forces in our literature, whose influence is yet unspent. Of Jonathan Edwards, the greatest of American theologians and metaphysicians, and a religious genius of the first order, it is impossible to speak without respect, and even reverence. No theologian born in our country has exercised more influence on minds and souls kindred to his own. Those who opposed him recognized his pre-eminent powers of intellect. Everybody felt, in assailing such a consummate reasoner, the restraining modesty which a master-spirit always evokes in the minds of his adversaries. His treatise on the Will has been generally accepted as one of the marvels of intellectual acuteness, exercised on one of the most

difficult problems which have ever tested the resources of the human intellect. There have been many answers to it, but no answer which is generally considered unanswerable. Such works, indeed, as this of Edwards on the Will are not so much answered or refuted as gradually outgrown. But the treatise has certainly exercised and strengthened all the minds that have resolutely grappled with it, and has aided the development of the logical powers of American orthodox divines in a remarkable degree. Whether a controversialist agrees with its author, or dissents from him, Edwards always quickens the mental activity of everybody who strives to follow the course of his argumentation, or to detect the lurking fallacy which is supposed to be discoverable somewhere in the premises or processes of his logic. Perhaps this fallacy is to be found in the various senses in which Edwards uses the vital word "determination." To most readers who believe the will to be abstractly free, but that the actions of men commonly proceed from the characters they have gradually formed, the most satisfactory explanation of the mystery is that of Jouffroy, who declares that "Liberty is the ideal of the Me." Others may obtain consolation from Gilfillan's somewhat flippant remark, that everything a man does is not necessary before he does it, but is necessary after he has done it. Essentially the doctrine of Edwards agrees with that of philosophical necessity, and with that so vehemently urged by many scientists, that the actions of men are as much

controlled by law as the movements of the planets. The great difference between Edwards's theory and the others is, that he connects his metaphysics with a theological system, and his treatise remains as a kind of practical argument for the everlasting damnation of those who question the infallibility of its logic.

Edwards's large and subtle understanding was connected with an imagination of intense realizing power, and both were based on a soul of singular purity, open on many sides to communications from the Divine Mind. He had an almost preternatural conception of the "exceeding sinfulness of sin." His imagination was filled with ghastly images of the retribution which awaits on iniquity, and his reasoned sermons on eternal torments were but the outbreak of a sensitive feeling, a holy passion for goodness, which made him intolerant of any excellence which did not approach his ideal of godliness. But then his spiritual experience, though it inflamed one side of his imagination with vivid pictures of the terrors of hell, on the other side gave the most enrapturing visions of the spiritual joys of heaven. It is unfortunate for his fame that his hell has obtained for him more popular recognition than his heaven. Like other poets, such as Dante and Milton, his pictures of the torments of the damned have cast into the shade that celestial light which shines so lovingly over his pictures of the bliss of the redeemed. True religion, he tells us, consists in a great measure in holy affections, — in "a love of divine things for the beauty and sweetness of their

moral excellency." "Sweetness" is a frequent word all through Edwards's works, when he desires to convey his perception of the satisfactions which await on piety in this world, and the ineffable joy of the experiences of pious souls in the next; and this word he thrills with a transcendent depth of suggestive meaning which it bears in no dictionary, nor in the vocabulary of any other writer of the English language. He was certainly one of the holiest souls that ever appeared on the planet. The admiration which has been generally awarded to his power of reasoning should be extended to his power of affirming, that is, when he affirms ideas coming from those moods of blessedness in which his soul seems to be in direct contact with divine things, and vividly beholds what in other discourses his mind reasons up to or about. To reach these divine heights, however, you must, according to Edwards, mount the stairs of dogma built by Augustine and Calvin.

Jonathan Edwards may be characterized as a man of the next world. Benjamin Franklin was emphatically a man of this world. Not that Franklin lacked religion and homely practical piety, but he had none of Edwards's intense depth of religious experience. God was to him a beneficent being, aiding good men in their hard struggles with the facts of life, and not pitiless to those who stumbled in the path of duty, or even to those who widely diverged from it. The heaven of Edwards was as far above his spiritual vision as the hell of Edwards was below his soundings

of the profundities of human wickedness; but there never was a person who so swiftly distinguished an honest man from a rogue, or who was more quick to see that the rogue was at war with the spiritual constitution of things. He seems to have learned his morality in a practical way. All his early slips from the straight line of duty were but experiments, from which he drew lessons in moral wisdom. If he happened occasionally to lapse into vice, he made the experience of vice a new fortress to defend his virtue; and he came out of the temptations of youth and middle age with a character generally recognized as one of singular solidity, serenity, and benignity. His intellect, in the beautiful harmony of its faculties, his conscience, in the instinctive sureness of its perception of the relations of duties, and his heart, in its subordination of malevolent to beneficent emotions,— all showed how diligent he had been in the austere self-culture which eventually raised him to the first rank among the men of his time. Simplicity was the fine result of the complexities which entered into his mind and character. He was a man who never used words except to express positive thoughts or emotions, and was never tempted to misuse them for the purposes of declamation. He kept his style always on the level of his character. In announcing his scientific discoveries, as in his most private letters, he is ever simple. In breadth of mind he is probably the most eminent man that our country has produced; for while he was the greatest diplomatist, and one of

the greatest statesmen and patriots of the United States, he was also a discoverer in science, a benignant philanthropist, and a master in that rare art of so associating words with things that they appeared identical. Edwards represents, humanly speaking, the somewhat doleful doctrine that the best thing a good man can do is to get out, as soon as he decently can, of this world into one which is immeasurably better, by devoting all his energies to the salvation of his own particular soul. Franklin, on the contrary, seems perfectly content with this world, as long as he thinks he can better *it*. Edwards would doubtless have considered Franklin a child of wrath, but Francis Bacon would have hailed him as one of that band of explorers who, by serving Nature, will in the end master her mysteries, and use their knowledge for the service of man. Indeed, the cheerful, hopeful spirit which runs through Franklin's writings, even when he was tried by obstacles which might have tasked the proverbial patience of Job, is not one of the least of his claims upon the consideration of those who rightfully glory in having such a genius for their countryman. The spirit which breathes through Franklin's life and works is that which has inspired every pioneer of our Western wastes, every poor farmer who has tried to make both ends meet by the exercise of rigid economy, every inventor who has attempted to serve men by making machines do half the drudgery of their work, every statesman who has striven to introduce large principles into our some-

what confused and contradictory legislation, every American diplomatist who has upheld the character of his country abroad by sagacity in managing men, as well as by integrity in the main purpose of his mission, and every honest man who has desired to diminish the evil there is in the world, and to increase every possible good that is conformable to good sense. Franklin is doubtless our Mr. Worldly Wiseman, but his worldly wisdom ever points to the Christian's prayer that God's will shall be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

One of the most ludicrous misinterpretations of this large, bounteous, and benignant intelligence is that which confines his influence to the little corner of his mind in which he lodged "Poor Richard." It is common even now to hear complaints from opulent English gentlemen that Franklin has done much to make the average American narrow in mind, hard of heart, greedy of small gains, mean in little economies. This is said of a nation the poorer portions of whose population are needlessly wasteful, and whose richer portions astonish Europe annually by the profusion with which they scatter dollars to the right and the left. The maxims of poor Richard are generally good, and the more they are circulated, the more practical good they will do; for our countrymen are remarkable rather for violating than for obeying them. In all these criticisms on Franklin, however, it is strange that few have observed what a delicious specimen of humorous characterization he has introduced into lit-

erature in his charming delineation of Poor Richard. The effect is heightened by the groaning, droning way in which the good man delivers his bits of wisdom, as if he despairingly felt that the rustics around him would disregard his advice and monitions, and pass through the usual experiences of the passions, insensible to the gasping, croaking voice which warned them in advance.

Franklin is probably the best specimen that history affords of what is called a self-made man. He certainly "never worshipped his maker," according to Mr. Clapp's stinging epigram, but was throughout his life, though always self-respectful, never self-conceited. Perhaps the most notable result of his self-education was the ease with which he accosted all grades and classes of men on a level of equality. The printer's boy became, in his old age, one of the most popular men in the French court, not only among its statesmen, but among its frivolous nobles and their wives. He ever estimated men at their true worth or worthlessness; but as a diplomatist he was a marvel of sagacity. The same ease of manner which recommended him to a Pennsylvania farmer was preserved in a conference with a statesman or a king. He ever kept his end in view in all his complaisances, and that end was always patriotic. When he returned to his country he was among the most earnest to organize the liberty he had done so much to achieve; and he also showed his hostility to the system of negro slavery with which the United States was accursed. At

the ripe age of eighty-four he died, leaving behind him a record of extraordinary faithfulness in the performance of all the duties of life. His sagacity, when his whole career is surveyed, amounts almost to saintliness; for his sagacity was uniformly devoted to the accomplishment of great public ends of policy or beneficence.

Edwards was born three years before Franklin, and died in 1758, nearly twenty years before the war broke out. Franklin died in 1790. Both being representative men, may properly be taken as points of departure in considering those writers and thinkers who were educated under the influences of the pre-Revolutionary period of our literary history. The writings of Washington, Adams, Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison, Jay, are a recognized portion of our literature, because the hoarded wisdom slowly gathered in by their practical knowledge of life crops out in their most familiar correspondence. A truism announced by such men brightens into a truth, because it has evidently been tested and proved by their experience in conducting affairs. There is an elemental grandeur in Washington's character and career which renders impertinent all mere criticism on his style; for what he was and what he did are felt to outvalue a hundredfold what he wrote, except we consider his writings as mere records of his sagacity, wisdom, patience, disinterestedness, intrepidity, and fortitude. John Adams had a large, strong, vehement mind, interested in all questions relating to government. He was a personage

of indomitable individuality, large acquirements, quick insight, and resolute civic courage; but the storm and stress of public affairs gave to much of his thinking a character of intellectual irritation, rather than of sustained intellectual energy. His moral impatience was such that he seems to fret as he thinks. Jefferson, of all our early statesmen, was the most efficient master of the pen, and the most "advanced" political thinker. In one sense, as the author of the Declaration of Independence, he may be called the greatest, or at least the most generally known, of American authors. But in his private correspondence his literary talent is most displayed, for by his letters he built up a party which ruled the United States for nearly half a century, and which was, perhaps, only overturned because its opponents cited the best portions of Jefferson's writings against conclusions derived from the worst. In executive capacity he was relatively weak; but his mistakes in policy and his feebleness in administration, which would have ruined an ordinary statesman at the head of so turbulent a combination of irascible individuals as the democratic party of the United States, were all condoned by those minor leaders of faction who, yielding to the magic persuasiveness of his pen, assured their followers that the great man could do no wrong. Read in connection with the events of his time, Jefferson's writings must be considered of permanent value and interest. As a political leader he was literally a man of letters; and his letters are masterpieces, if viewed

as illustrations of the arts by which political leadership may be attained. In his private correspondence he was a model of urbanity and geniality. The whole impression derived from his works is that he was a better man than his enemies would admit him to be, and not so great a man as his partisans declared him to be. Few public men who have been assailed with equal fury have exhibited a more philosophical temper in noticing assailants. Though occasionally spiteful in his references to rivals, his leading fault, as a political leader, was not so much in being himself a libeller as in the protection he extended to libellers who lampooned men obnoxious to him. His own mind seems to have been singularly temperate; but he had a marvellous toleration for the intemperance of the rancorous defamers of Washington, Hamilton, and Adams. The Federalists hated him with such a mortal hatred, and showered on him such an amount of horrible invective, that he may have witnessed with a sarcastic smile the still coarser and fiercer calumnies which the band of assassins of character in his interest showered on the leading Federalists. Jefferson in this contest proved himself capable of malice as well as insincerity; but in a scrutiny of his Works it will be found that individually he had more amenity of temper than his opponents, for it must be remembered that in his political career he was stigmatized not only as the most wicked and foolish of politicians, but as the sultan of a negro harem, and that every circumstance of his private life was malignantly mis-

represented. Many eminent New England divines regarded him as an atheist as well as an anarchist, and thundered at him from their pulpits as though he was a new incarnation of the evil principle. Jefferson's comparative moderation, in view of the savage fierceness of the attacks on his personal, political, and moral character, must on the whole be commended; but still his moderation covered a large amount of private intrigue, and a readiness to use underhand means to compass what he may have deemed beneficent ends.

The names of Hamilton, Madison, and Jay are inseparably associated as the authors of the "Federalist," the political classic of the United States. Of the essays it contains, Hamilton wrote fifty-one, Madison twenty-nine, and Jay five. It is generally considered that Hamilton's are the best. Indeed, Alexander Hamilton was, next to Franklin, the most consummate statesman among the band of eminent men who had been active in the Revolution, and who afterward labored to convert a loose confederation of States into a national government. His mind was as plastic as it was vigorous and profound. It was the appropriate intellectual expression of a poised nature whose power was rarely obtrusive, because it was half concealed by the harmonious adjustment of its various faculties. It was a mind deep enough to grasp principles, and broad enough to regard relations, and fertile enough to devise measures. Indeed, the most practical of our early statesmen was also the most inventive. He was as ready with new expedients to

meet unexpected emergencies as he was wise in subordinating all expedients to clearly defined principles. In intellect he was probably the most creative of our early statesmen, as in sentiment Jefferson was the most widely influential. And Hamilton was so bent on practical ends that he was indifferent to the reputation which might have resulted from a parade of originality in the means he devised for their accomplishment. There never was a statesman less egotistic, less desirous of labelling a policy as "my" policy; and one of the sources of his influence was the subtle way in which he insinuated into other minds ideas which they appeared to originate. His moderation, his self-command, the exquisite courtesy of his manners, the persuasiveness of his ordinary speech, the fascination of his extraordinary speeches, and the mingled dignity and ease with which he met men of all degrees of intellect and character, resulted in making his political partisans look up to him as almost an object of political adoration. It is difficult to say what this accomplished man might have done as a leader of the Federal opposition to the Democratic administrations of Jefferson and Madison, had he not, in the maturity of his years and in the full vigor of his faculties, been murdered by Aaron Burr. Nothing can better illustrate the folly of the practice of duelling than the fact that, by a weak compliance with its maxims, the most eminent of American statesmen died by the hand of the most infamous of American demagogues. Certainly Hamilton had no need to

accept a challenge in order to vindicate his claim to courage. That had been abundantly shown in the field, at the bar, in the cabinet, before the people. There was hardly any form of courage, military, civic, or moral, in which he had not proved that he was insensible to every kind of fear. The most touching expression of it was, perhaps, the confession he publicly made that he had been entrapped into a guilty intrigue with a wily woman. The confession was necessary, to vindicate his integrity as a statesman, assailed by rancorous enemies. In reading it one is impressed with the innate dignity of character which such a mortifying disclosure of criminal weakness could not essentially degrade; and the allusion to his noble wife can hardly even now be read without tears. "This confession," he nobly says, "is not made without a blush. I cannot be the apologist of any vice because the ardor of passion may have made it mine. I can never cease to condemn myself for the pang which it may inflict on a bosom eminently entitled to all my gratitude, fidelity, and love; but that bosom will approve that, even at so great an expense, I should effectually wipe away a more serious stain from a name which it cherishes with no less elevation than tenderness. The public, too, I trust, will excuse the confession. The necessity of it to my defence against a more heinous charge could alone have extorted from me so painful an indecorum."

John Jay, another of the wise statesmen of the Revolution, who survived to perform services of ines-

timable value to the new constitutional government, was a man whose character needs no apologists. Webster finely said that "the spotless ermine of the judicial robe, when it fell on the shoulders of John Jay, touched nothing not as spotless as itself." His integrity ran down into the very roots of his moral being, and honesty was in him a passion as well as a principle. A great publicist as well as an incorruptible patriot, with pronounced opinions which exposed him to all the shafts of faction, his most low-minded and venomous adversaries felt that both his private and public character were unassailable. The celebrated "treaty" with Great Britain which he negotiated as the minister of the United States occasioned an outburst of Democratic wrath such as few American diplomatists have ever been called upon to face; but in all the fury of the opposition to it, few opponents were foolish enough to assail his integrity in assailing his judgment and general views of public policy.

Judge Story once said that to James Madison and Alexander Hamilton we were mainly indebted for the Constitution of the United States. It is curious that to Madison we are also mainly indebted for those Virginia "Resolutions of '98," which have been used to justify nullification and secession. With all his mental ability, Madison had not much original force of nature. He leaned now to Hamilton, now to Jefferson, and at last fell permanently under the influence of the genius of the latter. He was lacking in that

grand moral and intellectual impulse, underlying mere knowledge and logic, which distinguishes the man who reasons from the mere reasoner. His character was not on a level with his talents and acquirements; his much-vaunted moderation came from the absence rather than from the control of passion; and his understanding, though broad, was somewhat mechanical in its operations, and had no foundation in a corresponding breadth of nature. The "Resolutions of '98," which Southern Democrats came gradually to consider as of equal authority with the Constitution, were originally devised for a transient party purpose. The passage of the Alien and Sedition Laws, during the administration of John Adams, provoked Jefferson into writing a new "Declaration of Independence" — in this case directed not against Great Britain, but against the United States. He drew up a series of resolutions, which he sent to one of his subagents, George Nicholas, of Kentucky, to be adopted by the Legislature of that State. They were, with some omissions, passed. These resolutions substantially declared that the Federal Constitution was a compact between sovereign States, and that in case of a supposed violation of the compact, each party to it, as in other cases of parties having no common judge, had "an equal right to judge for itself, as well of infractions as of the mode and measure of redress." In a somewhat modified form, but still implicitly containing the poison of nullification, similar resolutions, drafted by Madison, were passed by the Legislature

of Virginia. The object evidently was to frighten the general government by a threat of State resistance to its authority, without any settled purpose of nullification or rebellion. When Jefferson and Madison became successively Presidents of the United States, they seemed to have forgotten their "resolutions," except to express their horror when, seventeen years afterward, a few mild Federal gentlemen, meeting at Hartford, appeared to show some vague intention of availing themselves of the precious constitutional doctrines which Jefferson and Madison had so boldly announced. The "Resolutions of '98" must be considered an important portion of our national literature, for they were exultingly adduced as the logical justification of the gigantic rebellion of 1861. It is rare, even in the history of political factions, that a string of cunningly written resolves, designed to meet a mere party emergency, should thus cost a nation thousands of millions of treasure and hundreds of thousands of lives.

When an armed ship has her upper deck cut down, and is thus reduced to an inferior class, it is said that she is "razeed." Fisher Ames may be called, on this principle, a razeed Burke. Of all the Federal writers and speakers of his time, he bears away the palm of eloquence. He has something of Burke's affluence of imagination, something of Burke's power of condensing political wisdom into epigrammatic apothegms, and more than Burke's hatred of "French principles;" but he lacks the immense moral force of Burke's

individuality, the large scope of his reason, the overwhelming intensity of his passion. Still, his merits as a writer, when compared with those of most of his contemporaries, are so striking that his countrymen seem unjust in allowing such an author to drop out of the memory of the nation. He was the despairing champion of a dying cause; he decorated the grave of Federalism with some of the choicest flowers of rhetoric; but the flowers are now withered, and the tomb itself hardly receives its due meed of honor.

The most eminent writers of the period which extends from 1776 to the first decade of the nineteenth century were either statesmen or theologians. Between these the poets, essayists, and romancers occupy a comparatively subordinate place; for we estimate the value of a literature, not so much by the character of the subjects with which it deals, as by the power of mind it evinces in dealing with them. As it regards our scholars and men of letters of that time, it must be remembered that the colonies were colonies of intellectual as well as of political Britain, and that their ideals of intellectual excellence were formed on English models. Our poets could only give a local color to a diction which was essentially that of Milton, or Dryden, or Pope, or Goldsmith, or Gray. They imitated these poets in a vain attempt to attain their elevation, simplicity, or compactness of style; but in doing this they merely did what contemporary versifiers in London or Edinburgh were intent on doing. Their verse has not survived, but it is not more com-

pletely forgotten than the verse of Mason, and Hayley, and Henry James Pye. They could write heroic verse as well as most of the English imitators of Pope, and Pindaric odes as well as most of the English imitators of Gray. Indeed, the verses with which our forefathers afflicted the world are generally not so bad as the verses of the poet laureates of England, from the period when Dryden was deprived of the laurel to the period when Southey reluctantly accepted it. Timothy Dwight, an eminent patriot and theologian, was early smitten with the ambition to be a poet. He wrote "America," "The Conquest of Canaan" (an epic), "Greenfield Hill," and "The Triumph of Infidelity." These poems are not properly subjects of criticism, because they are hopelessly forgotten, and no critical resurrectionist can give them that slight appearance of vitality which would justify an examination of their merits and demerits. Yet they are reasonably good of their kind, and "Greenfield Hill," especially, contains some descriptions which are almost worthy to be called charming. Dwight, as a Latin scholar, occasionally felt called upon to show his learning in his rhymes. Thus in one of his poems he characterizes one of the most delightful of Roman lyrists as "desipient" Horace. After a diligent exploration of the dictionary the reader finds that *desipient* comes from a Latin word signifying "to be wise," and that its English meaning is "trifling, foolish, playful." It might be supposed that in the whole range of English poetry there was no descrip-

tive epithet so ludicrously pedantic; but, fortunately for our patriotism, we can convict Dryden of a still greater sin against good taste. In Dryden's first ode (1687) for Saint Cecilia's Day we find the following lines: —

> "Orpheus could lead the savage race,
> And trees uprooted left their place,
> *Sequacious* of the lyre."

It cannot be doubted that Timothy Dwight's "desipient" is as poetically justifiable as John Dryden's "sequacious."

Perhaps the most versatile of our early writers of verse was Philip Freneau (1752–1832), a man of French extraction, possessing the talents of a ready writer, and endowed with that brightness and elasticity of mind which makes even shallowness of thought and emotion pleasing. He composed patriotic songs and ballads, satirized Tories, enjoyed the friendship of Franklin, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe, and was in his day quite a literary power. Most of his writings, whether in verse or prose, were "occasional," and they died with the occasions which called them forth.

Perhaps a higher rank should be assigned to John Trumbull (1750–1831), who at the breaking out of the Revolution wrote the first canto of "McFingal," and published the third in 1782. This poem, written in Hudibrastic verse, is so full of original wit and humor that we hardly think of it as an imitation of Butler's immortal doggerel until we are reminded

that many of the pithy couplets of "McFingal" are still quoted as felicitous hits of the ingenious mind of the author of "Hudibras." The immense popularity of the poem is unprecedented in American literary history. The first canto rapidly ran through thirty editions. Longfellow's "Evangeline" attained about the same circulation when the population of the country was thirty millions. "McFingal" was published when our population was only three millions. The poem, indeed, is to be considered as one of the forces of the Revolution, because as a satire on the Tories it penetrated into every farm-house, and sent the rustic volunteers laughing into the ranks of Washington and Greene. The vigor of mind and feeling displayed throughout the poem gives an impetus to its incidents which "Hudibras," with all its wonderful flashes of wit, comparatively lacks.

Francis Hopkinson (1737–91) was another of the writers who served the popular cause by seizing every occasion to make the British pretensions to rule ridiculous as well as hateful. His "Battle of the Kegs" probably laughed a thousand men into the Republican ranks. His son, Francis Hopkinson, wrote the most popular of American lyrics, "Hail, Columbia!" It is curious that this ode has no poetic merit whatever. There is not a line, not an epithet, in the whole composition which distinguishes it from the baldest prose.

Robert Treat Paine, Jr., was originally named by his father Thomas; but being a zealous Federalist, he induced the Legislature of Massachusetts to change

his cognomen into Robert Treat, because, detesting the theological iconoclast who was both a Democrat and an infidel, he desired, he said, to have a *Christian* name. His song of "Adams and Liberty" is far above Hopkinson's "Hail, Columbia!" in emphasis of phrase, richness of illustration, and resounding harmony of versification. Even now it kindles enthusiasm, like the lyrics of Campbell, though it is, of course, more mechanical in structure and more rhetorical in tone than the "Battle of the Baltic" and the "Mariners of England." At the time, however, it roused a similar enthusiasm.

But all the poets of the United States were threatened with extinction or subordination when Joel Barlow (1755–1812) appeared. He was, according to all accounts, an estimable man, cursed with the idea not only that he was a poet, but the greatest of American poets; and in 1808 he published, in a superb quarto volume, "The Columbiad." It was also published in Paris and London. The London "Monthly Magazine" tried to prove not only that it was an epic poem, but that it was surpassed only by the Iliad, the Æneid, and "Paradise Lost." Joel Barlow is fairly entitled to the praise of raising mediocrity to dimensions almost colossal. Columbia is, thank Heaven, still alive; "The Columbiad" is, thank Heaven, hopelessly dead. There are some elderly gentlemen still living who declare that they have read "The Columbiad," and have derived much satisfaction from the perusal of the same; but their evidence cannot stand the test of

cross-examination. They cannot tell what the poem is, what it teaches, and what it means. No critic within the last fifty years has read more than a hundred lines of it, and even this effort of attention has been a deadly fight with those merciful tendencies in the human organization which softly wrap the overworked mind in the blessedness of sleep. It is the impossibility of reading "The Columbiad" which prevents any critical estimate of its numberless demerits.

It is to be noted that, admitting all the poetic talent that our versifiers from 1776 to 1810 can claim, they are exceeded in all the requisites of poetry by contemporary prose writers. Fisher Ames, in a political article contributed to a newspaper, often displayed a richness of imagery, a harmony of diction, and an intensity of sentiment and passion which would have more than supplied our rhymers with materials for a canto. John Jay was not, like Fisher Ames, a man who thought in images, yet in one instance his fervid honesty enabled him to outleap every versifier of his time in the exercise of impassioned imagination. In a letter addressed to the States of the Confederation he showed the horrible injustice wrought by the depreciated currency of the country. "Humanity," he said, "as well as justice, makes this demand upon you; the complaints of ruined widows and the cries of fatherless children, whose whole support has been placed in your hands and melted away, have doubtless reached you; *take care that they ascend no higher.*" And if we consider poetry in its inmost essence, what

can exceed in sentiment and imagination the statement in prose of the perfections of the maiden whom Jonathan Edwards, the austere theologian, was so fortunate as to win for his wife? To be sure, the description runs back to the year 1723, when Edwards was only twenty years old. "They say," he writes, "there is a young lady in New Haven who is beloved of that Great Being who made and rules the world, and that there are certain seasons in which this Great Being, in some way or other invisible, comes to her and fills her mind with exceeding sweet delight, and that she hardly cares for anything except to meditate on Him; that she expects after a while to be received up where He is, to be raised up out of the world and caught up into heaven, being assured that He loves her too well to let her remain at a distance from Him always. There she is to dwell with Him, and to be ravished with His love and delight forever. Therefore, if you present all the world before her, with the richest of its treasures, she disregards it and cares not for it, and is unmindful of any pain or affliction. She has a strange sweetness in her mind, and singular purity in her affections; is most just and conscientious in all her conduct; and you could not persuade her to do anything wrong or sinful if you would give her all the world, lest she should offend this Great Being. She is of a wonderful sweetness, calmness, and universal benevolence of mind, especially after this Great God has manifested Himself to her mind. She will sometimes go about from place to place sing-

ing sweetly, and seems to be always full of joy and pleasure, *and no one knows for what.* She loves to be alone, walking in the fields and groves, and seems to have some one invisible always conversing with her." The "sage and serious" Spenser, in all his lovely characterizations of feminine excellence, never succeeded in depicting a soul more exquisitely beautiful than this of Sarah Pierrepont as viewed through the consecrating imagination of Jonathan Edwards.

The leading writers of fiction during the period immediately succeeding the Revolution were Susanna Rowson, Hugh Henry Brackenridge, and Charles Brockden Brown. Mrs. Rowson's novel of "Charlotte Temple" attained the unprecedented circulation of twenty-five thousand copies, not so much for its literary merits as on account of its foundation in a mysterious domestic scandal which affected the reputation of a number of prominent American families. Brackenridge was a Democrat of a peculiar kind, generally supporting his party, but reserving to himself the right of criticising and satirizing it. At the time the antislavery section of the Democratic party in the State of New York was called by the nickname of "Barnburners," Mr. J. G. Saxe, the poet, was asked to define his position. "I am," he replied, "a Democrat with a proclivity to arson." Brackenridge at an earlier period showed a similar restlessness in his dissent from the policy of a party whose principles he generally advocated. His principal work is "Modern Chivalry; or, the Adventures of Captain Farrago

and Teague O'Regan, his Servant." The author had a vague idea of Americanizing Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. The adventures are somewhat coarsely and clumsily portrayed, but it gave Brackenridge an opportunity to satirize the practical workings of Democracy, and he did it with pitiless severity. Teague is represented as a creature only a little raised above the condition of a beast, ignorant, credulous, greedy, and brutal, lacking both common sense and moral sense, but still ambitious to attain political office, and willing to put himself forward as a candidate for posts the duties of which he could not by any possibility perform. The exaggeration is heightened at times into the most farcical caricature; but the book can be read even now with profit by the champions of civil service reform. There are also in the course of the narrative some deadly shafts launched, in a humorous way, against the institution of slavery. Charles Brockden Brown (1771–1810) was our first novelist by profession. At the time he wrote "Arthur Mervyn," "Edgar Huntley," "Clara Howard," and "Wieland" the remuneration of the novelist was so small that he could only make what is called "a living" by sacrificing every grace and felicity of style to the inexorable need of writing rapidly, and therefore inaccurately. Brown, in his depth of insight into the morbid phenomena of the human mind, really anticipated Hawthorne; but hurried as he was by that most malignant of literary devils, the printer's, he produced no such masterpieces of literary art as "The Scarlet Letter,"

"The Blithedale Romance," and "The Marble Faun." Brown is one of the most melancholy instances of a genius arrested in its orderly development by the pressure of circumstances. In mere power his forgotten novels rank very high among the products of the American imagination. And it should be added that though he is unread, he is by no means unreadable. "Wieland; or, the Transformation," has much of the thrilling interest which fastens our attention as we read Godwin's "Caleb Williams," or Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter." With all his faults, Brown does not deserve to be the victim of the bitterest irony of criticism, that, namely, of not being considered worth the trouble of a critical examination. His writings are contemptuously classed among dead books, interesting to the antiquary alone. Still, they have that vitality which comes from the presence of genius, and a little stirring of the ashes under which they are buried would reveal sparks of genuine fire.

The progress of theology during the thirty years which followed the Revolution is illustrated by the works of many men of mark in their profession, and by two men of original though somewhat crotchety religious genius, Samuel Hopkins and Nathaniel Emmons. It is the rightful boast of Calvinism, that whatever judgment may be passed on the validity of its dogmas, nobody can question its power to give strength to character, to educate men into strict habits of deductive reasoning, and to comfort regenerated and elected souls with the blissful feeling that

they are in direct communication with the Divine Mind. But even before the Revolution broke out there was a widely diffused though somewhat lazy mental insurrection against its doctrines by men who were formally connected with its churches; and Jonathan Edwards, the greatest successor of Calvin, was dismissed from his pastoral charge in Northampton because he had attempted to refuse Christian fellowship to those members of the church who, though they assented to Calvinistic opinions, had given "no evidence of saving grace" in their hearts. The devil, Edwards said, was very orthodox in faith, and his speculative knowledge in divinity exceeded that of "a hundred saints of ordinary education." It was but natural that the unconverted members of Orthodox churches, who were distinguished more by their social position, wealth, and good moral character than by their capacity to stand Edwards's test of vital piety, should end in doubting the truth of the doctrines by the relentless application of which they were proscribed as non-Christian. The Revolution brought into the country not merely French soldiers, but the sceptical philosophy of the great French writers of the eighteenth century. The French officers were practically missionaries of unbelief. The light but stinging mockery of Voltaire had educated the intelligent French mind into a shallow contempt for all the mysteries of the Christian religion; and in fighting for our liberties, these gay, bright Frenchmen fought also against our accredited theological

faith. There is something ludicrous in this contact of the French with the Yankee mind. Men like Franklin, Jefferson, John Adams, and others, had already adopted opinions which were opposed to Calvinism, but they had no strong impulse to announce their religious convictions. The general drift of the popular mind set in such an opposite direction, that they hesitated to peril their political aims in a vain attempt to enforce their somewhat languid theological views. Unitarianism, or Liberal Christianity, so called, had not yet arisen; and the protest against Calvinism first took the form of an open denial of the Christian faith. Thus Ethan Allen published in 1784 a work which he called "Reason the Only Oracle of Man." He summoned the fort of Ticonderoga to surrender in "the name of the Great Jehovah, and of the Continental Congress;" he afterward demanded that the impregnable fortress of Christianity should surrender in the name of Ethan Allen. Christianity declined to obey the summons of this stalwart Vermont soldier — doubtless much to his surprise.

But the man who was the most influential assailant of the orthodox faith was Thomas Paine. He was the arch infidel, the infidel *par éminence*, whom our early and later theologians have united in holding up as a monster of iniquity and unbelief. The truth is that Paine was a dogmatic, well-meaning iconoclast, who attacked religion without having any religious experience or any imaginative perception of the vital

spiritual phenomena on which religious faith is based. Nobody can read his "Age of Reason," after having had some preparatory knowledge derived from the study of the history of religions, without wondering at its shallowness. Paine is, in a spiritual application of the phrase, color-blind. He does not seem to know what religion is. The reputation he enjoyed was due not more to his masterly command of all the avenues to the average popular mind than to the importance to which he was lifted by his horrified theological adversaries. His merit as a writer against religion consisted in his hard, almost animal, common-sense, to whose tests he subjected the current theological dogmas. He was a kind of vulgarized Voltaire. His eminent services to the country during the Revolutionary war were generally known — indeed, were acknowledged by the leading statesmen of the United States. His memorable pamphlet entitled "Common-Sense" reached a circulation of a hundred thousand copies. It was followed up by a series of tracts, under the general name of "The Crisis," which were almost as efficient as their predecessor in rousing, sustaining, and justifying the patriotism of the nation. He was the author of the now familiar maxim that "these are the times that try men's souls." His after-career in England and France resulted in his pamphlet on "The Rights of Man," directed against Burke's assault on the principles and methods of the French Revolutionists of 1789. It was unmistakably the ablest answer that

any of the democrats of France, England, and the United States had made to Burke's eloquent and philosophic impeachment of the motives and conduct of the actors in that great convulsion. One passage still survives, because it almost rivals Burke himself in the power of making a thought tell on the general mind by aptness of imagery. "Nature," says Paine, "has been kinder to Mr. Burke than he is to her. He is not affected by the realities of distress touching his heart, but by the showy resemblance of it striking his imagination. *He pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird.*" A writer thus known to the American people, not only as the champion of their individual rights, but of the rights of all mankind, could not fail to exert much influence when he brought his peculiar power of simple, forcible, and sarcastic statement to an assault on the religion of the country whose nationality he had done so much to establish. He never touched the inmost sanctuaries of Calvinism, though he seriously damaged some of its outworks; and the fault of the eminent divines who opposed him was in throwing all their strength in defending what was proved in the end to be indefensible.

Indeed, it is pitiable to witness the obstructions which strong minds and religious hearts raised against an inevitable tendency of human thought. While infidelity was slowly undermining the system of theology on which they based the sentiment and the substance of religious belief, these theologians exerted their powers of reasoning in controversies,

waged against each other, relating to the question whether deductive arguments from adroitly detached Scriptural texts could fix the time when original sin made infants liable to eternal damnation. Some argued that the spiritual disease was communicated in the moment of conception; others, a little more humane, contended that the child must be born before it could righteously be damned; others insisted that a certain time after birth, left somewhat undetermined, but generally assigned to the period when the child attains to moral consciousness, should elapse before it was brought under the penalties of the universal curse. The current theology of his time could not sustain the attacks of such a hard, vulgar reasoner as Paine, except by withdrawing into its vital and unassailable position, namely, its power of converting depraved souls into loving disciples of the Lord. The thinking of the dominant theologians of that period has been quietly repudiated by their successors, and it has failed to establish any place in literature because it was exerted on themes which the human mind and human heart have gradually ignored. Still, the practical effects of the teaching of the great body of Orthodox clergymen have been immense. It would be unjust to measure their influence by the success or failure of theories devised by the speculative ingenuity of their representative divines. It is impossible to estimate too highly the services of the clergymen of the country in the formation of the national character. Their sermons

have not passed into literature. A band of "ministers," contented with small salaries, on which they almost starved, and with no reputation beyond their little parishes, labored year after year in the obscure work of purifying, elevating, and regenerating the individuals committed to their pastoral charge; and when they died, in all the grandeur with which piety invests poverty, they were swiftly succeeded by men who valiantly trod the same narrow path, leading to no success recognized on earth as brilliant or self-satisfying.

The period of our literary history between 1810 and 1840 witnessed the rise and growth of a literature which was influenced by the new "revival of letters" in England during the early part of the present century, represented by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Scott, Campbell, Byron, Shelley, Keats, and Moore. Most of these eminent men were not only writers but powers; they communicated spiritual life to the soul, as well as beautiful images and novel ideas to the mind; and touching, as they did, the profoundest sources of imagination, reason, and emotion, they quickened latent individual genius into original activity by the magnetism they exerted on sympathetic souls, and thus stimulated emulation rather than imitation. The wave of Wordsworthianism swept gently over New England, and here and there found a mind which was mentally and morally refreshed by drinking deeply of this new water of life. But Pope was still for a long time the pontiff

of poetry, recognized by the cultivated men of Boston no less than by the cultivated men of London and Edinburgh. Probably there occurred no greater and more sudden change from the old school to the new than in the case of a precocious lad who bore the name of William Cullen Bryant. At the age of fourteen, in the year 1808, he produced a versified satire on Jefferson's administration called "The Embargo." It was just as good and just as bad as most American imitations of Pope; but the boy indicated a facility in using the accredited verse of the time which excited the wonder and admiration of his elders. Vigor, compactness, ringing emphasis in the constantly recurring rhymes, — all seemed to show that a new Pope had been born in Massachusetts. The genius of the lad, however, was destined to take a different road to fame than that which was marked out by his admirers. He read the lyrical ballads of Wordsworth; and his friend R. H. Dana informs us that Bryant confessed to him that on reading that volume "a thousand springs seemed to gush up at once into his heart, and the face of Nature of a sudden changed into a strange freshness and life." Accordingly his next poem of any importance was "Thanatopsis." We are told that it was written when he was only eighteen. It was published in the "North American Review" for 1816, when he was twenty-two. The difference of four years makes little difference in the remarkable fact that the poem indicates no sign of youth whatever. The perfection of

its rhythm, the majesty and dignity of the tone of matured reflection which breathes through it, the solemnity of its underlying sentiment, and the austere unity of the pervading thought, would deceive almost any critic into affirming it to be the product of an imaginative thinker to whom "years had brought the philosophic mind." Still, it must be remembered that the poets in whom meditation and imagination have been most harmoniously blended have produced some of their best works when they were comparatively young. This is specially the case as regards Wordsworth. His poem on revisiting Tintern Abbey, written when he was twenty-eight, introduced an absolutely new element into English poetry, and was specially characterized by that quality of calm, deep, solid reflection which is commonly considered to be the peculiarity of genius when it has attained the maturity which age and experience alone can give. The wonderful "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality from the Recollections of Early Childhood," written about four years later, indicates the highest point which the poetic insight and the philosophic wisdom of Wordsworth ever reached; and it ought, on ordinary principles of criticism, to have been written thirty years later than the date which marks its birth. Nothing which Wordsworth afterward wrote, though precious in itself, displayed anything equal to these poems in maturity of thought and imagination. It is doubtful if Bryant's "Thanatopsis" has been excelled by the many deep and beautiful poems which he has written

since. In his case, as in that of Wordsworth, we are puzzled by the old head suddenly erected on young shoulders. They leap over the age of passion by a single bound, and become poetic philosophers at an age when other poets are in the sensuous stage of imaginative development. In estimating the claim of Bryant to be ranked as the foremost of American poets, it may be said that he opened a rich and deep, if somewhat narrow, vein, which he has worked with marvellous skill, and that he has obtained more pure gold from his mine than many others who have sunk shafts here and there into more promising deposits of the precious metal. He is, perhaps, unequalled among our American poets in his grasp of the elemental life of nature. His descriptions of natural scenery always imply that nature, in every aspect it turns to the poetic eye, is thoroughly *alive*. Nobody can read his poems called "The Evening Wind," "Green River," "The Death of the Flowers," the invocation "To a Water-Fowl," "An Evening Reverie," "To the Fringed Gentian," not to mention others, without feeling that this poet has explored the inmost secrets of nature, and has shown how natural objects can be wedded to the human mind in "love and holy passion." In the abstract imagination which celebrates the fundamental idea and ideal of our American life, what can excel his noble verses on "The Antiquity of Freedom"? "The Land of Dreams" is perhaps the most exquisite of Bryant's poems, as in it thought, sentiment, and imagination

are more completely dissolved in melody than in any other of his poems. In a criticism of the range of Bryant's mind it must be remembered that his poetry is only one expression of it. His life has been generally passed in political struggles which have called forth all his powers of statement and reasoning, based on a patient study of the phenomena presented by our social and political life. As the editor of the New York "Evening Post," he has shown himself an able publicist, an intelligent economist, and a resolute party champion. And at a period of life when most men are justified in resting from their labors, he undertook the gigantic task of translating into blank verse such as few but he can give, the whole of the Iliad and the Odyssey.

Another eminent writer of the period — and one who also happily survives, at the advanced age of eighty-eight, an object of the deserved respect and admiration of his countrymen — was Richard Henry Dana. His articles in the "North American Review," from 1817 to 1819, were remarkable compositions for the time. The long paper on the English poets, published in 1819, surveys the whole domain of English poetry from Chaucer to Wordsworth. It exhibits a comprehensiveness of taste, a depth and delicacy of critical perception, and a grasp of the spiritual elements which enter into the highest efforts of creative minds, unexampled in any previous American contribution to the philosophy of criticism. His discernment of the relative rank and worth of British poets is

specially noticeable. He interpreted before he judged; and in interpreting he showed, in old George Chapman's phrase, that he possessed the "fit key," that is, the "deep and treasurous heart,"

"With poesy to open poesy."

Even among the cultivated readers of the "North American" there were few who could appreciate Dana's profound analysis of the genius of Wordsworth and Coleridge. In 1821 he began "The Idle Man," of which six numbers were published. In this appeared his celebrated paper on Edmund Kean, the best piece of theatrical criticism in American literature; two novels, "Tom Thornton" and "Paul Felton," dealing with the darker passions of our nature in a style so abrupt, a feeling so intense, and a moral purpose so inexorable that they rather terrified than pleased the "idle men" who read novels; and several of those beautiful meditations on nature and human life, in which the author exhibits himself as

"A being breathing thoughtful breath,
A traveller betwixt life and death."

"The Idle Man" did not succeed. In 1827 he published a thin volume entitled "The Buccaneer, and Other Poems." These are sufficient to give him a high rank among American poets, though they have obtained but little hold on popular sympathy. "The Buccaneer" is remarkable for its representation, equally clear, of external objects and internal moods

of thought and passion. In one sense it is the most "objective" of poems; in another, the most "subjective." The truth would seem to be that Dana's overpowering conception of the terrible reality of sin — a conception almost as strong as that which was fixed in the imagination of Jonathan Edwards — interferes with the artistic disposition of his imagined scenes and characters, and touches even some of his most enchanting pictures with a certain baleful light. An uneasy spiritual discontent, a moral despondency, is evident in his verse as well as in his prose, and his large powers of reason and imagination seem never to have been harmoniously blended in his artistic creations. Still, he remains one of the prominences of our literature, whether considered as poet, novelist, critic, or general thinker.

Washington Allston, the greatest of American painters, was also a graceful poet. "His mind," says Mr. Dana, "seems to have in it the glad but gentle brightness of a star, as you look up to it, sending pure influences into your heart, and making it kind and cheerful." As a poet, however, he is now but little known. As a prose writer, his lectures on Art, and especially his romance of "Monaldi," show that he could paint with the pen as well as with the brush. It is difficult to understand why "Monaldi" has not obtained a permanent place in our literature. There is in it one description of a picture representing the visible struggle of a soul in the toils of sin which in intensity of conception and passion exceeds any pic-

ture he ever painted. The full richness of Allston's mind was probably only revealed to those who for years enjoyed the inestimable privilege of hearing him converse. It is to be regretted that no copious notes were taken of his conversations. Mrs. Jameson, in her visit to the United States, was so surprised to witness such opulence of thought conveyed in such seemingly careless talk, that she took a few notes of his deep and beautiful sayings. It would have been well if Dana and others who from day to day and year to year saw the clear stream of conversation flow ever on from the same inexhaustible mind, had made the world partakers of the wealth with which they were enriched. Allston, indeed, was one of those men whose works are hardly the measure of their powers — who can talk better than they can write, and conceive more vividly than they can execute.

The "revival" of American literature in New York differed much in character from its revival in New England. In New York it was purely human in tone; in New England it was a little superhuman in tone. In New England they feared the devil; in New York they dared the devil; and the greatest and most original literary dare-devil in New York was a young gentleman of good family, whose "schooling" ended with his sixteenth year, who had rambled much about the island of Manhattan, who had in his saunterings gleaned and brooded over many Dutch legends of an elder time, who had read much but had studied little, who possessed fine observation, quick intelligence, a

genial disposition, and an indolently original genius in detecting the ludicrous side of things, and whose name was Washington Irving. After some preliminary essays in humorous literature his genius arrived at the age of *in*discretion, and he produced at the age of twenty-six the most deliciously audacious work of humor in our literature, namely, "The History of New York, by Diedrich Knickerbocker." It is said of some reformers that they have not only opinions, but the courage of their opinions. It may be said of Irving that he not only caricatured, but had the courage of his caricatures. The persons whom he covered with ridicule were the ancestors of the leading families of New York, and these families prided themselves on their descent. After the publication of such a book he could hardly enter the "best society" of New York, to which he naturally belonged, without running the risk of being insulted, especially by the elderly women of fashion; but he conquered their prejudices by the same grace and geniality of manner, by the same unmistakable tokens that he was an inborn gentleman, through which he afterward won his way into the first society of England, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain. Still, the promise of Knickerbocker was not fulfilled. That book, if considered as an imitation at all, was an imitation of Rabelais, or Swift, or of any author in any language who had shown an independence of all convention, who did not hesitate to commit indecorums, and who laughed at all the regalities of the world. The author lived

long enough to be called a timid imitator of Addison and Goldsmith. In fact, he imitated nobody. His genius, at first riotous and unrestrained, became tamed and regulated by a larger intercourse with the world, by the saddening experience of life, and by the gradual development of some deep sentiments which held in check the audacities of his wit and humor. But even in the portions of "The Sketch-Book" relating to England it will be seen that his favorite authors belonged rather to the age of Elizabeth than to the age of Anne. In "Bracebridge Hall" there is one chapter called "The Rookery," which in exquisitely poetic humor is hardly equalled by the best productions of the authors he is said to have made his models. That he possessed essential humor and pathos, is proved by the warm admiration he excited in such masters of humor and pathos as Scott and Dickens; and style is but a secondary consideration when it expresses vital qualities of genius. If he subordinated energy to elegance, he did it, not because he had the ignoble ambition to be ranked as "a fine writer," but because he was free from the ambition, equally ignoble, of simulating a passion which he did not feel. The period which elapsed between the publication of Knickerbocker's history and "The Sketch-Book" was ten years. During this time his mind acquired the habit of tranquilly contemplating the objects which filled his imagination, and what it lost in spontaneous vigor it gained in sureness of insight and completeness of representation. "Rip Van

Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" have not the humorous inspiration of some passages in Knickerbocker, but perhaps they give more permanent delight, for the scenes and characters are so harmonized that they have the effect of a picture, in which all the parts combine to produce one charming whole. Besides, Irving is one of those exceptional authors who are regarded by their readers as personal friends, and the felicity of nature by which he obtained this distinction was expressed in that amenity, that amiability of tone, which some of his austere critics have called elegant feebleness. As a biographer and historian, his "Life of Columbus" and his "Life of Washington" have indissolubly connected his name with the discoverer of the American continent and the champion of the liberties of his country. In "The Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada" and "The Alhambra" he occupies a unique position among those writers of fiction who have based fiction on a laborious investigation into the facts of history. His reputation is not local, but is recognized by all cultivated people who speak the English language. If Great Britain established an English intellectual colony in the United States, such men as Irving and Cooper may be said to have retorted by establishing an American intellectual colony in England.

James Fenimore Cooper was substantially a New Yorker, though accidentally born (in 1789) in New Jersey. He entered Yale College in 1802, and three years after left it without graduating, having obtained

a midshipman's warrant in the United States navy. He remained in the naval service for six years. In 1811 he married, and in 1821 began a somewhat memorable literary career by the publication of a novel of English life, called "Precaution," which failed to attract much attention. In the same year, however, he published another novel, relating to the Revolutionary period of our history, called "The Spy," and rose at once to the position of a power of the first class in our literature. The novels which immediately followed did, on the whole, increase his reputation; and after the publication of "The Red Rover," in 1827, his works were not only eagerly welcomed by his countrymen, but were translated into almost all the languages of Europe. Indeed, it seemed at one time that Cooper's fame was co-extensive with American commerce. The novels were intensely American in spirit, and intensely American in scenery and characters; but they were also found to contain in them something which appealed to human nature everywhere. Much of their popularity was doubtless due to Cooper's vivid presentation of the wildest aspects of nature in a comparatively new country, and his creation of characters corresponding to their physical environment; but the essential influence he exerted is to be referred to the pleasure all men experience in the kindling exhibition of man as an active being. No Hamlets or Werthers or Renés or Childe Harolds were allowed to tenant his woods or appear on his quarter-decks. Will, and the trained sagacity and

experience directing will, were the invigorating elements of character which he selected for romantic treatment. Whether the scene be laid in the primitive forest or on the ocean, his men are always struggling with each other or with the forces of nature. This primal quality of robust manhood all men understand, and it shines triumphantly through the interposing fogs of French, German, Italian, and Russian translations. A physician of the mind could hardly prescribe a more efficient tonic for weak and sentimental natures than a daily diet made up of the most bracing passages in the novels of Cooper.

Another characteristic of Cooper, which makes him universally acceptable, is his closeness to nature. He agrees with Wordsworth in this, that in all his descriptions of natural objects he indicates that he and nature are familiar acquaintances, and, as Dana says, have "talked together." He takes nothing at second-hand. If brought before a justice of the peace, he could solemnly swear to the exact truth of his representations without running any risk of being prosecuted for perjury. Cooper as well as Wordsworth took nature, as it were, at first-hand, the perceiving mind coming into direct contact with the thing perceived; but Wordsworth primarily contemplated nature as the divinely appointed food for the nourishment of the spirit that meditates, while Cooper felt its power as a stimulus to the spirit that acts. No two minds could, in many respects, be more different, yet both agree in the instinctive sagacity which detects the

heroic under the guise of the homely. The greatest creation of Cooper is the hunter and trapper, Leatherstocking, who appears in five of his best novels, namely, "The Pioneers," "The Last of the Mohicans," "The Prairie," "The Pathfinder," and "The Deerslayer," and who is unmistakably the life of each. The simplicity, sagacity, and intrepidity of this man of the woods, his quaint sylvan piety and humane feeling, the perfect harmony established between his will and reason, his effectiveness equal to all occasions, and his determination to dwell on those vanishing points of civilization which faintly mark the domain of the settler from that of the savage, altogether combine to make up a character which is admired equally in log-cabins and palaces. Wordsworth, in one of the most exquisite of his minor poems, — "Three Years She grew in Sun and Shower," — has traced the process of Nature in making "a lady of her own." Certainly Leatherstocking might be quoted as a successful attempt of the same austere goddess to make, out of ruder materials, a man of "her own."

Cooper lived to write thirty-four novels, the merits of which are so unequal that at times we are puzzled to conceive of them as the products of one mind. His failures are not to be referred to that decline of power which accompanies increasing age, for "The Deerslayer," one of his best novels, was written six years after his worst novel, "The Monikins." He often failed, early as well as late in his career, not because his faculties were impaired, but because they were

misdirected. One of the secrets of his fascination was also one of the causes of his frequent dulness. He equalled De Foe in the art of giving reality to romance by the dexterous accumulation and management of details. In his two great sea novels, "The Pilot" and "The Red Rover," the important events are preceded by a large number of minor incidents, each of which promises to be an event. The rocks which the vessel by cunning seamanship escapes are described as minutely as the rocks on which she is finally wrecked. It is difficult for the reader to conceive that he is not reading an account of an actual occurrence. He unconsciously transports himself to the deck of the ship, participates in all the hopes and fears of the crew, thanks God when the keel just grazes a ledge without being seriously injured, and finally goes down into the "hell of waters" in company with his imagined associates. In such scenes the imagination of the reader is so excited that he has no notion whether the writer's style is good or bad. He is made by some magic of words to see, feel, realize, the situation; the verbal method by which the miracle is wrought he entirely ignores or overlooks. But then the preliminaries to these grand scenes which exhibit intelligent man in a life-and-death contest with the unintelligent forces of nature — how tiresome they often are! The early chapters of "The Red Rover," for example, are dull beyond expression. The author's fondness for detail trespasses on all the reserved fund of human patience.

It is only because "expectation sits i' the air" that we tolerate his tediousness. If we desire to witness the conduct of the man-of-war in the tempest and the battle, we must first submit to follow all the cumbersome details by which she is slowly detached from the dock and laboriously piloted into the open sea. There is more "padding" in Cooper's novels than in those of any author who can make any pretensions to rival him. His representative sailors, Long Tom Coffin, Tom Tiller, Nightingale, Bolthrope, Trysail, Bob Yarn, not to mention others, are admirable as characters, but they are allowed to inflict too much of their practical wisdom on the reader. In fact, it is a great misfortune, as it regards the permanent fame of Cooper, that he wrote one-third, at least, of his novels at all, and that he did not condense the other two-thirds into a third of their present length.

Cooper, on his return from Europe in 1833 or 1834, published a series of novels satirizing what he considered the faults and vices of his countrymen. The novels have little literary merit, but they afforded an excellent opportunity to exhibit the independence, intrepidity, and integrity of the author's character. It is a pity he ever wrote them; still, they proved that he became a bad novelist in order to perform what he deemed to be the duties of a good citizen. Indeed, as a brave, high-spirited, noble-minded man, somewhat too proud and dogmatic, but thoroughly honest, he was ever on a level with the best characters in his best works.

The names of Joseph Rodman Drake and Fitz-Greene Halleck are connected, not merely by personal friendship, but by partnership in poetry. Both were born in the same year, 1795, but Drake died in 1820, while Halleck survived to 1867. Halleck, in strength of constitution as well as in power of mind, was much superior to his fragile companion; but Drake had a real enthusiasm for poetry, which Halleck, though a poet, did not possess. Drake's "Culprit Fay" is an original American poem, formed out of materials collected from the scenery and traditions of the classical American river, the Hudson; but it was too hastily written to do justice to the fancy by which it was conceived. His "Ode on the American Flag" derives its chief strength from the resounding quatrain by which it is closed, and these four lines were contributed by Halleck. Indeed, Drake is, on the whole, less remembered by his own poems than by the beautiful tribute which Halleck made to his memory. They were coadjutors in the composition of the "Croaker Papers," originally contributed to the New York "Evening Post;" but the superiority of Halleck to his friend is manifest at the first glance. One of the puzzles which arrest the attention of a historian of American literature is to account for the strange indifference of Halleck to exercise often the faculty which on occasions he showed he possessed in superabundance. All the subjects he attempted — the "Croaker Papers," "Fanny," "Burns," "Red Jacket," "Alnwick Castle," "Connecticut," the

magnificent heroic ode, "Marco Bozzaris" — show a complete artistic mastery of the resources of poetic expression, whether his theme be gay or grave, or compounded of the two. His extravagant admiration of Campbell was founded on Campbell's admirable power of compression. Halleck thought that Byron was a mere rhetorician in comparison with his favorite poet. Yet it is evident to a critical reader that a good deal of Campbell's compactness is due to a studied artifice of rhythm and rhyme, while Halleck seemingly writes in verse as if he were not trammelled by its laws; and his rhymes naturally recur without suggesting to the reader that his condensation of thought and feeling is at all affected by the necessity of rhyming. Prose has rarely been written with more careless ease and more melodious compactness than Halleck has shown in writing verse. The wonder is, that with this conscious command of bending verse into the brief expression of all the moods of his mind, he should have written so little. The only explanation is to be found in his scepticism as to the vital reality of those profound states of consciousness which inspire poets of less imaginative faculty than he possessed to incessant activity. He was among poets what Thackeray is among novelists. Being the well-paid clerk and man of business of a millionnaire, his grand talent was not stung into exertion by necessity. Though he lived to the age of seventy-two, he allowed year after year to pass without any exercise of his genius. "What 's the use?" —

that was the deadening maxim which struck his poetic faculties with paralysis. Yet what he has written, though very small in amount, belongs to the most precious treasures of our poetical literature. What he might have written, had he so chosen, would have raised him to a rank among our first men of letters, which he does not at present hold.

James K. Paulding (1778–1860) completes this peculiar group of New York authors. He was connected with Irving in the production of the "Salmagundi" essays, and was at one time prominent as a satirist, humorist, and novelist. Most of his writings are now forgotten, though they evinced a somewhat strong though coarse vein of humor, which was not without its effect at the period when its local and political allusions and personalities were understood. A scene in one of his novels indicates the kind of comicality in which he excelled. The house of an old reprobate situated on the bank of a river is carried away by a freshet. In the agony of his fear he strives to recall some prayer which he learned when a child; but as he rushes distractedly up and down the stairs of his floating mansion he can only remember the first line of the baby's hymn, "Now I lay me down to sleep," which he incessantly repeats as he runs.

While these New York essayists, humorists, and novelists were laughing at the New Englander as a Puritan, and satirizing him as a Yankee, there was a peculiar revival of spiritual sentiment in New Eng-

land, which made its mark in general as well as in theological literature. In the very home of Puritanism there was going on a reaction against the fundamental doctrines of Calvinism and the inexorable faith of the Pilgrim Fathers. This reaction began before the Revolutionary war, and continued after it. Jonathan Mayhew, the pastor of the West Church of Boston, was not only a flaming defender of the political rights of the colonies, but his sermons also teemed with theological heresies. He rebelled against King Calvin as well as against King George. Probably Paine's "Age of Reason" had afterward some effect in inducing prominent Boston clergymen, reputed orthodox, to silently drop from their preaching the leading dogmas of the accredited creed. With such accomplished ministers as Freeman, Buckminster, Thacher, and their followers, sermonizing became more and more a form of moralizing, and the "scheme of salvation" was ignored or overlooked in the emphasis laid on the performance of practical duties. What would now be called rationalism, either expressed or implied, seemed to threaten the old orthodox faith with destruction by the subtle process of sapping and undermining without directly assailing it. The sturdy Calvinists were at first puzzled what to do, as the new heresiarchs did not so much offend by what they preached as by what they omitted to preach; but they at last forced those who were Unitarians in opinion to become Unitarians in profession, and thus what was intended as a peaceful

evolution of religious faith was compelled to assume the character of a revolutionary protest against the generally received dogmas of the Christian churches. The two men prominent in this insurrection against ancestral orthodoxy were William Ellery Channing and Andrews Norton. Channing was a pious humanitarian; Norton was an accomplished Biblical scholar. Channing assailed Calvinism because, in his opinion, it falsified all right notions of God; Norton, because it falsified the true interpretation of the Word of God. Channing's soul was filled with the idea of the dignity of human nature, which, he thought, Calvinism degraded; Norton's mind resented what he considered the illogical combination of Scripture texts to sustain an intolerable theological theory. Channing delighted to portray the felicities of a heavenly frame of mind; Norton delighted to exhibit the felicities of accurate exegesis. Both were masters of style; but Channing used his rhetoric to prove that the doctrines of Calvinism were abhorrent to the God-given moral nature of man; Norton employed his somewhat dry and bleak but singularly lucid powers of statement, exposition, and logic to show that his opponents were deficient in scholarship and sophistical in argumentation. Channing's literary reputation, which overleaped all the boundaries of his sect, was primarily due to his essay on Milton; but Norton could not endure the theological system on which "Paradise Lost" was based, and therefore laughed at the poem. Norton had

little of that imaginative sympathy with the mass of mankind for which Channing was pre-eminently distinguished. Anybody who has mingled much with Unitarian divines must have heard their esoteric pleasantry as to what these two redoubtable champions of the Unitarian faith would say when they were transferred from earth to heaven. Channing, as he looks upon the bright rows of the celestial society, rapturously declares, "This gives me a new idea of the dignity of human nature;" Norton, with a certain patrician exclusiveness born of scholarly tastes, folds his hands, and quietly says to Saint Peter or Saint Paul, "Rather a miscellaneous assemblage." But on earth they worked together, each after his gifts, to draw out all the resources of sentiment, scholarship, and reasoning possessed by such able opponents as they found in Stuart, Woods, and Park. There can be no doubt that Calvinism, in its modified Hopkinsian form, gained increased power by the wholesome shaking which Unitarianism gave it; for this shaking kindled the zeal, sharpened the intellects, stimulated the mental activity of every professor of the evangelical faith. Neither Channing nor Norton, in assailing the statements in which the Calvinistic creed was mechanically expressed, exhibited an interior view of the creed as it vitally existed in the souls of Calvinists. Channing, however, was still the legitimate spiritual successor of Jonathan Edwards in affirming, with new emphasis, the fundamental doctrine of Christianity, that God is in direct communica-

tion with the souls of His creatures. The difference is that Edwards holds the doors of communication so nearly closed that only the elect can pass in; Channing throws them wide open, and invites everybody to be illumined in thought and vitalized in will by the ever-fresh outpourings of celestial light and warmth. But Channing wrote on human nature as though the world was tenanted by actual or possible Channings, who possessed his exceptional delicacy of spiritual perception and his exceptional exemption from the temptations of practical life. He was, as far as a constant contemplation of the Divine perfections was concerned, a meditative saint; and had he belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, he probably would, on the ground of his spiritual gifts, have been eventually canonized. Still, the seductive subjectivity of his holy outlook on nature and human life tended to make the individual consciousness of what was just and good the measure of Divine justice and goodness; and in some mediocre minds, which his religious genius magnetized, this tendency brought forth distressing specimens of spiritual sentimentality and pious pertness. The most curious result, however, of Channing's teachings was the swift way in which his disciples overleaped the limitations set by their master. In the course of a single generation some of the most vigorous minds among the Unitarians, practising the freedom of thought which he inculcated as a duty, indulged in theological audacities of which he never dreamed. He was the intellectual father of

Theodore Parker, and the intellectual grandfather of Octavius B. Frothingham. Parker and Frothingham, both humanitarians, but students also of the advanced school of critical theologians, soon made Channing's heresies tame when compared with the heresies they promulgated. The Free Religionists are the legitimate progeny of Channing.

But, in the interim, the theologian and preacher who came nearest to Channing in the geniality and largeness of his nature, and the persuasiveness with which he enforced what may be called the conservative tenets of Unitarianism, was Orville Dewey, a man whose mind was fertile, whose religious experience was deep, and who brought from the Calvinism in which he had been trained an interior knowledge of the system which he early rejected. He had a profound sense not only of the dignity of human nature, but of the dignity of human life. In idealizing human life he must still be considered as giving some fresh and new interpretations of it, and his discourses form, like Channing's, an addition to American literature, as well as a contribution to the theology of Unitarianism. He defended men from the assaults of Calvinists, as Channing had defended Man. Carlyle speaks somewhere of "this dog-hole of a world;" Dewey considered it, with all its errors and horrors, as a good world on the whole, and as worthy of the Divine beneficence.

The work which may be said to have bridged over the space which separated Channing from Theodore

Parker was "Academical Lectures on the Jewish Scriptures and Antiquities," by Dr. John G. Palfrey, Professor of Biblical Literature in the University at Cambridge, published in 1838, but which had doubtless influenced the students who had listened to them many years before their publication. This book is noticeable for the scholarly method by which most of the miracles recorded in the Old Testament are explained on natural principles, and the calm, almost prim and polite, exclusion of miracle from the Hebrew Scriptures. Accepting miracle when he considered it necessary, Dr. Palfrey broke the spell and charm, at least among Unitarian students of theology, which separated the Hebrew Bible from other great works which expressed the religious mind of the human race; and his "Academical Lectures" remain as a palpable landmark in the progress of American rationalism.

But probably the greatest literary result of the Unitarian revolt was the appearance in our literature of such a phenomenon as Ralph Waldo Emerson. He came from a race of clergymen; doubtless much of his elevation of character and austere sense of the grandeur of the moral sentiment is his by inheritance; but after entering the ministry he soon found that even Unitarianism was a limitation of his intellectual independence to which he could not submit; and, in the homely New England phrase, "he set up on his own account," responsible *for* nobody, and not responsible *to* anybody. His radicalism penetrated to the very root of dissent, for it was founded on the idea

that in all organizations, social, political, and religious, there must be an element which checks the free exercise of individual thought; and the free exercise of his individual thinking he determined should be controlled by nothing instituted and authoritative on the planet. Descartes himself did not begin his philosophizing with a more complete self-emancipation from all the opinions generally accepted by mankind. But Descartes was a reasoner; Emerson is a seer and a poet; and he was the last man to attempt to overthrow accredited systems in order to substitute for them a dogmatic system of his own. In his view of the duty of "man thinking," this course would have been to violate his fundamental principle, which was that nobody "could lay copyright on the world;" that no theory could include Nature; that the greatest thinker and discoverer could only add a few items of information to what the human mind had previously won from "the vast and formless infinite;" and that the true work of a scholar was not to inclose the field of matter and mind by a system which encircled it, but to extend our knowledge in straight lines, leading from the vanishing points of positive knowledge into the illimitable unknown spaces beyond. Emerson's peculiar sphere was psychology. By a certain felicity of his nature he was a non-combatant; indifferent to logic, he suppressed all the processes of his thinking, and announced its results in affirmations; and none of the asperities which commonly afflict the apostles of dissent ever ruffled the serene spirit of this univer-

sal dissenter. He could never be seduced into controversy. He was assailed both as an atheist and as a pantheist; as a writer so obscure that nobody could understand what he meant, and also as a mere verbal trickster, whose only talent consisted in vivifying commonplaces, or in converting, by inversion, stale truisms into brilliant paradoxes; and all these varying charges had only the effect of lighting up his face with that queer, quizzical, inscrutable smile, that amused surprise at the misconceptions of the people who attacked him, which is noticeable in all portraits and photographs of his somewhat enigmatical countenance. His method was very simple and very hard. It consisted in growing up to a level with the spiritual objects he perceived, and his elevation of thought was thus the sign and accompaniment of a corresponding elevation of character. In his case, as in the case of Channing, there was an unconscious return to Jonathan Edwards, and to all the great divines whose "souls had sight" of eternal verities. What the orthodox saints called the Holy Ghost, he, without endowing it with personality, called the Over Soul. He believed with them that in God we live and move and have our being; that only by communicating with this Being can we have any vital individuality; and that the record of a communication with Him or It was the most valuable of all contributions to literature, whether theological or human. The noblest passages in his writings are those in which he celebrates this august and gracious communion of the Spirit of God

with the soul of man; and they are the most serious, solemn, and uplifting passages which can perhaps be found in our literature. Here was a man who had earned the right to utter these noble truths by patient meditation and clear insight. Carlyle exclaimed, in a preface to an English edition of one of Emerson's later volumes: "Here comes our brave Emerson, with *news* from the empyrean!" That phrase exactly hits Emerson as a transcendental thinker. His insights were, in some sense, revelations; he could "gossip on the eternal politics;" and just at the time when science, relieved from the pressure of theology, announced materialistic hypotheses with more than the confidence with which the bigots of theological creeds had heretofore announced their dogmas, this serene American thinker had won his way into all the centres of European intelligence, and delivered his quiet protest against every hypothesis which put in peril the spiritual interests of humanity. It is curious to witness the process by which this heresiarch has ended in giving his evidence, or rather his experience, that God is not the Unknowable of Herbert Spencer, but that, however infinitely distant He may be from the human understanding, He is still intimately near to the human soul. And Emerson knows by experience what the word *soul* really means!

"Were she a body, how could she remain
Within the body which is less than she?
Or how could she the world's great shape contain,
And in our narrow breasts contained be?

"All bodies are confined within some place,
But she all place within herself confines;
All bodies have their measure and their space,
But who can draw the soul's dimensive lines?"

In an unpublished speech at a celebration of Shakspeare's birthday, he spoke of Shakspeare as proving to us that "the soul of man is deeper, wider, higher than the spaces of astronomy;" and in another connection he says that "a man of thought must feel that thought is the parent of the universe," that "the world is *saturated* with deity and with law."

It is this depth of spiritual experience and subtilty of spiritual insight which distinguish Emerson from all other American authors, and make him an elementary power as well as an elementary thinker. The singular attractiveness, however, of his writings comes from his intense perception of Beauty, both in its abstract quality as the "awful loveliness" which such poets as Shelley celebrated, and in the more concrete expression by which it fascinates ordinary minds. His imaginative faculty, both in the conception and creation of beauty, is uncorrupted by any morbid sentiment. His vision reaches to the very sources of beauty, — the beauty that cheers. The great majority even of eminent poets are "saddest when they sing." They contrast life with the beautiful possibilities of life which their imaginations suggest, and though their discontent with the actual may inspire by the energy of its utterance, it tends also to depress by emphasizing the impossibility of realizing the ideals

it depicts. But the perception of beauty in nature or in human nature, whether it be the beauty of a flower or of a soul, makes Emerson joyous and glad; he exults in celebrating it, and he communicates to his readers his own ecstatic mood. He has been a diligent student of many literatures and many religions; but all his quotations from them show that he rejects everything in his manifold readings which does not tend to cheer, invigorate, and elevate, which is not nutritious food for the healthy human soul. If he is morbid in anything, it is in his comical hatred of all forms of physical, mental, and moral disease. He agrees with Dr. Johnson in declaring that "every man is a rascal as soon as he is sick." "I once asked," he says, "a clergyman in a retired town who were his companions — what men of ability he saw. He replied that he spent his time with the sick and the dying. I said he seemed to me to need quite other company, and all the more that he had this; for if people were sick and dying to any purpose, we should leave all and go to them, but, as far as I had observed, they were as frivolous as the rest, and sometimes much more frivolous." Indeed, Emerson, glorying in his own grand physical and moral health, and fundamentally brave, is impatient of all the weaknesses of humanity, especially those of men of genius. He never could be made to recognize the genius of Shelley, except in a few poems, because he was disgusted with the wail that persistently runs through Shelley's wonderfully imaginative poetry. In his

taste, as in his own practice as a writer, he is a stout believer in the desirableness and efficacy of mental tonics, and a severe critic of the literature of discontent and desperation. He looks curiously on while a poet rages against destiny and his own miseries, and puts the ironical query, "Why so hot, my little man?" His ideal of manhood was originally derived from the consciousness of his own somewhat haughty individuality, and it has been fed by his study of the poetic and historic records of persons who have dared to do heroic acts and dared to utter heroic thoughts. Beauty is never absent from his celebration of these, but it is a beauty that never enfeebles, but always braces and cheers.

Take the six or eight volumes in which Emerson's genius and character are embodied, — that is, in which he has converted truth into life, and life into more truth, — and you are dazzled on every page by his superabundance of compactly expressed reflection, and his marvellous command of all the resources of imaginative illustration. Every paragraph is literally "rammed with life." A fortnight's meditation is sometimes condensed in a sentence of a couple of lines. Almost every word bears the mark of deliberate thought in its selection. The most evanescent and elusive spiritual phenomena, which occasionally flit before the steady gaze of the inner eye of the mind, are fixed in expressions which have the solidity of marble. The collection of these separate insights into nature and human life he ironically calls

an essay; and much criticism has been wasted in showing that the aphoristic and axiomatic sentences are often connected by mere juxtaposition on the page, and not by logical relation with each other, and that at the end we have no perception of a series of thoughts leading up to a clear idea of the general theme. This criticism is just; but in reading Emerson we have not to do with such economists of thought as Addison, Johnson, and Goldsmith, — with the writers of the "Spectator," the "Rambler," and the "Citizen of the World." Emerson's so-called essay sparkles with sentences which might be made the texts for numerous ordinary essays; and his general title, it may be added, is apt to be misleading. He is fragmentary in composition because he is a fanatic for compactness; and every paragraph, sometimes every sentence, is a record of an insight. Hence comes the impression that his sentences are huddled together rather than artistically disposed. Still, with all this lack of logical order, he has the immense advantage of suggesting something new to the diligent reader after he has read him for the fiftieth time.

It is also to be said of Emerson that he is one of the wittiest and most practical as well as one of the profoundest of American writers, that his wit, exercised on the ordinary affairs of life, is the very embodiment of brilliant good sense, that he sometimes rivals Franklin in humorous insight, and that both his wit and humor obey that law of beauty which

governs every other exercise of his peculiar mind. He has many defects and eccentricities exasperating to the critic who demands symmetry in the mental constitution of the author whose peculiar merits he is eager to acknowledge. He occasionally indulges, too, in some strange freaks of intellectual and moral caprice which his own mature judgment should condemn, — the same pen by which they were recorded being used to blot them out of existence. They are audacities, but how unlike his grand audacities! In short, they are somewhat small audacities, unworthy of him and of the subjects with which he deals — escapades of epigram on topics which should have exacted the austerest exercise of his exceptional faculty of spiritual insight. Nothing, however, which can be said against him touches his essential quality of manliness, or lowers him from that rank of thinkers in whom the seer and the poet combine to give the deepest results of meditation in the most exquisite forms of vital beauty. And then how superb and animating is his lofty intellectual courage! "The soul," he says, "is in her native realm, and it is wider than space, older than time, wide as hope, rich as love. Pusillanimity and fear she refuses with a beautiful scorn. They are not for her who putteth on her coronation robes, and goes through universal love to universal power."

Emerson, though in some respects connected with the Unitarian movement as having been a minister of the denomination, soon cut himself free from it, and

was as independent of that form of Christian faith as he was of other forms. He drew from all quarters, and whatever fed his religious sense of mystery, of might, of beauty, and of Deity was ever welcome to his soul. As he was outside of all religious organizations, and never condescended to enter into any argument with his opponents, he was soon allowed silently to drop out of theological controversy. But a fiercer and more combative spirit now appeared to trouble the Unitarian clergyman, — a man who considered himself a Unitarian minister, who had for Calvinism a stronger repulsion than Channing or Norton ever felt, and who attempted to drag on his denomination to conclusions at which most of its members stood aghast.

This man was Theodore Parker, a born controversialist, who had the challenging chip always on his shoulder, which he invited both his Unitarian and his Orthodox brethren to knock off. There never was a man who more gloried in a fight. If any theologians desired to get into a controversy with him as to the validity of their opposing beliefs, he was eager to give them as much of it as they desired. The persecution he most keenly felt was the persecution of inattention and silence. He was the Luther of radical Unitarianism. When the Unitarian societies refused fellowship with his society, he organized a church of his own, and made it one of the most powerful in New England. There was nothing but disease which could check, and nothing but death which could close

his controversial activity. He became the champion of radical as against conservative Unitarianism, and the persistent adversary even of the most moderate Calvinism. Besides his work in these fields of intellectual effort, he threw himself literally head-foremost — and his head was large and well-stored — into every unpopular reform which he could aid by his will, his reason, his learning, and his moral power. He was among the leaders in the attempt to apply the rigid maxims of Christianity to practical life; and many Orthodox clergymen, who combined with him in his assaults on intemperance, slavery, and other hideous evils of our civilization, almost condoned his theological heresies in their admiration of his fearlessness in practical reforms. He was an enormous reader and diligent student, as well as a resolute man of affairs. He also had great depth and fervency of piety. His favorite hymn was "Nearer, my God, to Thee." While assailing what the great body of New England people believed to be the foundations of religion, he startled vigorous orthodox reasoners by his confident teaching that every individual soul had a consciousness of its immortality independent of revelation, and superior to the results of all the modern physical researches which seemed to place it in doubt. Indeed, his own incessant activity was an argument for the soul's immortality. In spite of all the outside calls on his energies, he found time to attend strictly to his ministerial duties, to make himself one of the most accomplished theo-

logical and general scholars in New England, and to write and translate books which required deep study and patient thought. The physical frame, stout as it was, at last broke down — his mind still busy in meditating new works which were never to be written. Probably no other clergyman of his time, not even Mr. Beecher, drew his society so closely to himself, and became the object of so much warm personal attachment and passionate devotion. Grim as he appeared when, arrayed in his theological armor, he went forth to battle, he was in private intercourse the gentlest, most genial, and most affectionate of men. And it is to be added that few Orthodox clergymen had a more intense religious faith in the saving power of their doctrines than Theodore Parker had in the regenerating efficacy of his rationalistic convictions. When Luther was dying, Dr. Jonas said to him, "Reverend father, do you die in implicit reliance on the faith you have taught?" And from those lips, just closing in death, came the steady answering "Yes." Theodore Parker's answer to such a question, put to him on his death-bed, would have been the same.

II.

TOWARD the conclusion of the first portion of this paper, the necessity was shown of noticing the New England revolt against Calvinism, in order to account for certain peculiarities which characterize some prominent poets and men of letters who testify to its influence. The theological protest against Unitarianism was made by some of the most powerful minds and learned scholars in the country, — by Stuart, Park, Edwards, Barnes, Robinson, Lyman Beecher, the whole family of the Alexanders, of which Addison Alexander was the greatest, not to mention fifty others. The thought of these men still controls the theological opinion of the country, and their works are much more extensively circulated, and exert a greater practical influence, than the writings of such men as Channing, Norton, Dewey, Emerson, and Parker; but still they have not affected in a like degree the literature which springs from the heart, the imagination, and the spiritual sentiment. Unitarianism, through its lofty views of the dignity of human nature, naturally allied itself with the sentiment of philanthropy. While it has not been more practically conspicuous than other denominations for the love of man, as expressed in works to ameliorate his condition, it has succeeded better in domesticating philanthropy in literature, especially in poetry. Witness Bryant,

Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, Lowell, and Mrs. Howe.

Longfellow is probably the most popular poet of the country. The breadth of his sympathy, the variety of his acquisitions, the plasticity of his imagination, the sonorousness and weight of his verse, the vividness of his imagery, the equality, the beauty, the beneficence of his disposition, make him universally attractive and universally intelligible. Each of his minor poems is pervaded by one thought, and has that artistic unity which comes from the economic use of rich material. The "Hymn to the Night," "A Psalm of Life," "Footsteps of Angels," "The Skeleton in Armor," "The Wreck of the Hesperus," "The Village Blacksmith," "Excelsior," "The Arsenal at Springfield," "Sea-Weed," "Resignation," and other of his minor poems have found a lodgement in the memory of everybody, and it will be found that their charm consists in their unity as well as in their beauty, that they are as much poems, complete in themselves, as "Evangeline" or "Hiawatha." In "Maidenhood" and "Endymion," especially in the latter, the poet is revealed in all the exquisiteness, the delicacy, the refinement, of his imaginative faculty; but they are less popular than the poems previously mentioned, because they embody more subtile moods of the poetic mind. Longfellow's power of picturing to the eye and the soul a scene, a place, an event, a person, is almost unrivalled. His command of many metres, each adapted to his special subject, shows also how artistically he

uses sound to re-enforce vision, and satisfy the ear while pleasing the eye.

> "When descends on the Atlantic
> The gigantic
> Storm-wind of the equinox,
> Landward in his wrath he scourges
> The toiling surges,
> Laden with sea-weed from the rocks."

The ear least skilled to detect the harmonies of verse feels the obvious effect of lines like these. In his long poems, such as "Evangeline," "The Golden Legend," "Hiawatha," "The Courtship of Miles Standish," "The New England Tragedies," Longfellow never repeats himself. He occupies a new domain of poetry with each successive poem, and always gives the public the delightful shock of a new surprise. In his prose works, "Outre-Mer," "Hyperion," and "Kavanagh," he is the same man as in his verse, — ever sweet, tender, thoughtful, weighty, vigorous, imaginative, and humane. His great translation of Dante is not the least of his claims to the gratitude of his countrymen, for it is a new illustration of his life-long devotion — rare in an American — to the service of literature, considered as one of the highest exercises of patriotism.

Longfellow has enjoyed every advantage that culture can give, and his knowledge of many nations and many languages undoubtedly has given breadth to his mind, and opened to him ever new sources of poetic interest; but John Greenleaf Whittier, who contests

with him the palm of popularity as a poet, was one of those God-made men who are in a sense self-made poets. A musing farmer's boy, working in the fields, and ignorant of books, he early felt the poetic instinct moving in his soul, but thought his surroundings were essentially prosaic, and could never be sung. At last one afternoon, while he was gathering in the hay, a pedler dropped a copy of Burns into his hands. Instantly his eyes were unsealed. There in the neighboring field was "Highland Mary;" "The Cotter's Saturday Night" occurred in his own father's pious New England home; and the birds which carolled over his head, the flowers which grew under his feet, were as poetic as those to which the Scottish ploughman had given perennial interest. Burns taught him to detect the beautiful in the common; but Burns could not corrupt the singularly pure soul of the lad by his enticing suggestions of idealized physical enjoyment and unregulated passion. The boy grew into a man, cultivating assiduously his gift of song, though shy of showing it. The antislavery storm swept over the land, awakening consciences as well as stimulating intellects. Whittier had always lived in a region of moral ideas, and this antislavery inspiration inflamed his moral ideas into moral passion and moral wrath. If Garrison may be considered the prophet of antislavery, and Phillips its orator, and Mrs. Stowe its novelist, and Sumner its statesman, there can be no doubt that Whittier was its poet. Quaker as he was, his martial lyrics had something of the energy of a

primitive bard urging on hosts to battle. Every word was a blow, as uttered by this newly enrolled soldier of the Lord. "The silent, shy, peace-loving man" became a "fiery partisan," and held his intrepid way

"against the public frown,
The ban of Church and State, the fierce mob's hounding down."

He roused, condensed, and elevated the public sentiment against slavery. The poetry was as genuine as the wrath was terrific, and many a political time-server, who was proof against Garrison's hottest denunciations and Phillips's most stinging invectives, quailed before Whittier's smiting rhymes. Yet he tells us he was essentially a poetic dreamer, unfit "to ride the winged hippogriff Reform."

"For while he wrought with strenuous will
The work his hands had found to do,
He heard the fitful music still
Of winds that out of dream-land blew.

. . . . . .

"The common air was thick with dreams —
He told them to the toiling crowd;
Such music as the woods and streams
Sang in his ear he sang aloud.

"In still, shut bays, on windy capes,
He heard the call of beckoning shapes,
And, as the gray old shadows prompted him,
To homely moulds of rhyme he shaped their legends grim."

In these lines he refers to two kinds of poetry in which he has obtained almost equal eminence, — his intensely imaginative and meditative poems, and his ringing,

legendary ballads, the material of the latter having been gathered, in his wanderings, from the lips of sailors, farmers, and that class of aged women who connect each event they relate with the superstitions originally ingrafted upon it. It is needless to add that during the War of the Rebellion, and the political contests accompanying reconstruction, the voice of Whittier rang through the land to cheer, to animate, to uplift, and also to warn and denounce. Whittier, though creedless, is one of the most religious of our poets. In these days of scepticism as to the possibility of the communication of the Divine Mind with the human, it is consolatory to read his poem on "The Eternal Goodness," especially this stanza: —

> "I know not where His islands lift
> Their fronded palms in air;
> I only know I cannot drift
> Beyond His love and care."

Oliver Wendell Holmes — wit, satirist, humorist, novelist, scholar, scientist — is, above everything, a poet, for the qualities of the poet pervade all the operations of his variously gifted mind. His sense of the ludicrous is not keener than his sense of the beautiful; his wit and humor are but the sportive exercise of a fancy and imagination which he has abundantly exercised on serious topics; and the extensive learning and acute logic of the man of science are none the less solid in substance because in expression they are accompanied by a throng of

images and illustrations which endow erudition with life, and give a charm to the most closely linked chain of reasoning. The first thing which strikes a reader of Holmes is the vigor and elasticity of his nature. He is incapable of weakness. He is fresh and manly even when he securely treads the scarcely marked line which separates sentiment from sentimentality. This prevailing vigor proceeds from a strength of individuality which is often pushed to dogmatic self-assertion. It is felt as much in his airy, fleering mockeries of folly and pretension, as in his almost Juvenalian invectives against baseness and fraud — in the pleasant way in which he stretches a coxcomb on the rack of wit, as in the energy with which he grapples an opponent in the tussle of argumentation. He never seems to imagine that he can be inferior to the thinker whose position he assails, any more than to the noodle whose nonsense he jeers at. In argument he is sometimes the victor, in virtue of scornfully excluding what another reasoner would include, and thus seems to make his own intellect the measure of the whole subject in discussion. When in his Autocrat, or his Professor, or his Poet, at the Breakfast Table, he touches theological themes, he is peculiarly exasperating to theological opponents, not only for the effectiveness of his direct hits, but for the easy way in which he gayly overlooks considerations which their whole culture has induced them to deem of vital moment. The truth is that Holmes's dogmatism comes rather from the vividness and rapidity of his

perceptions than from the arrogance of his personality. "This," he seems to say, "is not my opinion; it is a demonstrated law which you wilfully ignore while pretending to be scholars." The indomitable courage of the man carries him through all the exciting controversies he scornfully invites. Holmes, for the last forty years, has been expressing this inexhaustible vitality of nature in various ways, and to-day he appears as vigorous as he was in his prime, more vigorous than he was in his youth. His early poems sparkled with thought and abounded in energy; but still they cannot be compared in wit, in humor, in depth of sentiment, in beauty of diction, in thoughtfulness, in lyrical force, with the poems of the past twenty-five years of his life. It is needless to give even the titles of the many pieces which are fixed in the memory of all cultivated readers among his countrymen. His novels "Elsie Venner" and "The Guardian Angel" rank high among original American contributions to the domain of romance. In prose, as in verse, his fecundity and vigor of thought have found adequate expression in a corresponding point and compactness of style.

James Russell Lowell is now in the prime of his genius and at the height of his reputation. His earlier poems, pervaded by the transcendental tone of thought current in New England at the time they were written, were full of promise, but gave little evidence of the wide variety of power he has since displayed. The spirituality of his thinking has deep-

ened with advancing years. Nothing in his first volume, "A Year's Life," suggests the depth of moral beauty he afterward embodied in "The Vision of Sir Launfal," the throng of subtle thoughts and images which almost confuse us by their multiplicity in "The Cathedral," and the grandeur of "The Commemoration Ode." "The Biglow Papers" are unique in our literature. Lowell adds to his other merits that of being an accomplished philologist; but granting his scholarship as an investigator of the popular idioms of foreign speech, he must be principally esteemed for his knowledge of the Yankee dialect. Hosea Biglow is almost the only writer who uses the dialect properly, and most other pretenders to a knowledge of it must be considered caricaturists as compared with him; for Biglow, like Burns, makes the dialect he employs flexible to every mood of thought and passion, from good sense as solid as granite to the most bewitching descriptions of nature and the loftiest affirmations of conscience. As a prose writer Lowell is quite as eminent as he is as a poet. His essays, where Nature is his theme, are brimful of delicious descriptions, and his critical papers on Chaucer, Shakspeare, Spenser, Dryden, Pope, and Rousseau, not to mention others, are masterpieces of their kind. His defect, both as poet and prose writer, comes from the too lavish use of his seemingly inexhaustible powers of wit, fancy, and imagination. He is apt to sacrifice unity of general effect by overloading his paragraphs with suggestive meaning. That wise reserve of

expression to which Longfellow owes so much of his reputation, that subordination of minor thoughts to the leading thought of the poem or essay, are frequently disregarded by Lowell. His mind is too rich to submit even to artistic checks on its fertility.

Julia Ward Howe, one of the most accomplished women in the United States, a scholar, a reasoner, an excellent prose writer, a poet with the power to uplift as well as to please, is also generally known as a champion of the right of women to vote. In the facts, arguments, and appeals which she brings to bear on this debated question, and the felicity of the occasional sarcastic strokes with which she smites an opponent who has offended her reason as well as vexed her patience, we find a woman fully equipped to do battle for the cause of woman; and certainly that man must be exceptionally endowed with brains who can afford to indulge in the luxury of despising her intellect. Her thrilling "Battle Hymn of the Republic" is an artistic variation on the John Brown song. The original is incomparable of its kind. No poet could have written it. Such rudeness and wildness are beyond the conception even of Walt Whitman and the author of "Festus." One would say that it was written by the common soldiers who sang it as they advanced to battle; that it was an elemental tune, suited to the rugged natures that shouted its refrain as they resolutely faced death, with the confident assurance of immortality. The words are verbal equivalents of rifle-bullets and cannon-balls;

the tune is a noise, like the shriek of the shell as it ascends to the exact point whence it can most surely descend to blast and kill. Mrs. Howe's hymn has not this elemental character, but it is still wonderfully animating and invigorating; and the constant use of Scripture phrases shows the high level of thought and sentiment to which her soul had mounted, and from which she poured forth her exulting strains. "Our Country," "The Flag," "Our Orders," are also thoughtful or impassioned outbreaks of the same spiritual feeling which gives vitality to the "Battle Hymn."

The authors thus grouped together, differing so widely as they do in the individuality impressed on their genius, are still connected by that peculiar impulse given to American literature by Channing's revolt against the Calvinistic view of human nature, and by the emphasis they all lay on the ethical sentiment, not merely in its practical application to the concerns of actual life, but as highly idealized in its application to that life which is called divine. The new poetical metaphysics and theology had not touched the mind of Charles Sprague. His poem of "Curiosity," delivered in 1829 before the Phi Beta Society of Harvard College, is so excellent in description, in the various pictures it gives of human life, in the pungency of its wit and satire, that it deserves a place among the best productions of the school of Pope and Goldsmith. His odes are more open to criticism, though they contain many thoughtful,

impassioned, and resounding lines. His "Shakspeare" ode is the best of these; and he concludes it with a very felicitous image, contrasting the success of the great poet of England in doing that which her statesmen and soldiers could not perform: —

> "Our Roman-hearted fathers broke
> Thy parent empire's galling yoke;
> But thou, harmonious monarch of the mind,
> Around their sons a gentler chain shall bind.
> Still o'er our land shall Albion's sceptre wave,
> And what her mighty lion lost her mightier swan shall save."

A more homely illustration of the fact that Shakspeare binds the English race together whithersoever it wanders, is afforded by the remark of a sturdy New England farmer when he heard the rumor that England intended to make the Mason and Slidell affair an occasion for war with the United States, and thus insure success to the Confederates. The farmer paused, reflected, sought out in his mind something which would indicate his complete severance not only from the people of England, but from the English mind, and at last condensed all his wrath in this intense remark, "Well, if that report is true, all I can say is that Lord Lyons is welcome to my copy of Shakspeare."

Perhaps Sprague's most original poems are those in which he consecrated his domestic affections. Wordsworth himself would have hailed these with delight. Anybody who can read with unwet eyes "I See Still," "The Family Meeting," "The Brothers," and

"Lines on the Death of M. S. C.," is a critic who has as little perception of the language of natural emotion as of the reserves and refinements of poetic art.

Sprague had the good fortune, as the cashier of a leading Boston bank, to be independent of his poetic gifts, considered as means of subsistence. But Nathaniel Parker Willis was, perhaps, the first of our poets to prove that literature could be relied upon as a good business. He certainly enjoyed all those advantages which accompany competence, and the only bank he could draw upon was his brain. He thoroughly understood the art of producing what people desired to read, and for which publishers were willing to pay. His early Scripture sketches, written when he was a student of Yale, gave him the reputation of a promising genius; and though the genius did not afterward take the direction to which its first successes pointed, it gained in strength and breadth with the writer's advancing years. In his best poems he displayed energy both of thought and imagination; but his predominant characteristics were keenness of observation, fertility of fancy, quickness of wit, shrewdness of understanding, a fine perception of beauty, a remarkable felicity in the choice of words, and a subtle sense of harmony in their arrangement, whether his purpose was to produce melodious verse or musical prose. But he doubtless squandered his powers in the attempt to turn them into commodities. To this he was driven by his necessities, and he always frankly acknowledged that he could have done better

with his brain had he possessed an income corresponding to that of other eminent American men of letters, who could select their topics without regard to the immediate market value of what they wrote. He became the favorite poet, satirist, and "organ" of the fashionable world. He wrote editorials, letters, essays, novels, which were full of evidences of his rare talent without doing justice to it. He idealized trivialities; he gave a kind of reality to the unreal; and week after week he lifted into importance the unsubstantial matters which for the time occupied the attention of "good society." Some of his phrases, such as "the upper ten thousand," "Fifth-Ave-nudity," are still remembered. The paper which Willis edited, the "Home Journal," exerted a great deal of influence. However slight might be the subjects, there can be no question that the editor worked hard in bringing the resources of his knowledge, observation, wit, and fancy to place them in their most attractive lights. The trouble was not in the vigor of the faculties, but in the thinness of much of the matter. As an editor, however, Willis had an opportunity to display his grand generosity of heart, and the peculiar power he had of detecting the slightest trace of genius in writers who were the objects of his appreciative eulogy. In the whole history of American literature there is no other example of a prominent man of letters who showed, like Willis, such a passionate desire to make his natural influence effective in dragging into prominence writers who either had

no reputation at all, or whose reputation was notoriously less than his.

James G. Percival had not Willis's happy disposition and adaptive talent. Though recognized by friends as a poet of the first (American) class, he never succeeded in interesting the great body of his intelligent countrymen in any but a few of his minor poems. He ranks among the great sorrowing class of neglected geniuses. A man of large though somewhat undigested erudition, knowing many languages and many sciences, he was seemingly ignorant of the art of marrying his knowledge to his imagination. When he wrote in prose, he was full of matter; when he wrote in verse, he was full of glow and aspiration and fancy, but wanting in matter. At present, the poet is required to supply nutriment as well as stimulant. Tennyson's immense popularity, which makes every new poem from his pen a literary event, is to be referred not merely to his imaginative power, but to his keeping himself on a level with the science and scholarship of his age. "In Memoriam" would not have attracted so much attention had it not been felt that the poet who celebrates a dead friend was at the same time all alive to the importance of problems, now vehemently discussed by theologians and scientists, which relate to the question of the reality and immortality of the human soul. Emerson, also, is not more noted for his grand reliance on the soul than for his acquaintance with the scientific facts and theories which appear to deny its existence.

Edgar Allan Poe, like Willis and Percival, adopted, or was forced into, literature as a profession. He was a man of rare original capacity, cursed by an incurable perversity of character. It cannot be said he failed of success. The immediate recognition as positive additions to our literature of such poems as "The Raven," "Annabel Lee," and "The Bells," and of such prose stories as "The Gold Bug," "The Purloined Letter," "The Murders of Rue Morgue," and "The Fall of the House of Usher," indicates that the public was not responsible for the misfortunes of his life. He also assumed the position of general censor and supervisor of American letters, and in this he also measurably succeeded; for his critical power, when not biassed by his caprices, was extraordinarily acute, and during the period of his domination no critic's praise was more coveted than his, and no critic's blame more dreaded. In most of his literary work he displayed that rare combination of reason and imagination to which may be given the name of imaginative analysis. He was so proud of this power that he was never weary of unfolding, even to a chance acquaintance, the genesis of his poems and stories, accounting, on reasonable grounds, for every melodious variation in the verse, every little incident touched upon in the narrative, as steps in a deductive argument from assumed premises. One of two things was necessary to quicken his mind into full activity. The first was animosity against an individual; the second was some chance suggestion which awakened

and tasked all the resources of his intellectual ingenuity. The wild, weird, unearthly, *under*-natural, as distinguished from supernatural, element in his most popular poems and stories is always accompanied by an imagination which not only spiritually discerns but relentlessly dissects. The morbid element, directing his powers, came from his character; the perfection of his analysis came from an intellect as fertile as it was calm, and as delicate in selecting every minute thread of thought as in seizing every evanescent shade of feeling.

Bayard Taylor is justly esteemed as one of the most eminent of American men of letters. A graduate of no university, he has mastered many languages; born in a Pennsylvania village, he may be said to have been everywhere and to have seen everybody; and all that he has achieved is due to his own persistent energy and tranquil self-reliance. Journalist, traveller, essayist, critic, novelist, scholar, and poet, he has ever preserved the simplicity of nature which marked his first book of travels, and the simplicity of style which the knowledge of many lands and many tongues has never tempted him to abandon. His books of voyages and travels are charming, but their charm consists in the austere closeness of the words he uses to the facts he records, the scenery he depicts, and the adventures he narrates. The same simplicity of style characterizes his poems, his few novels, and numerous stories. The richness of his vocabulary never impels him to sacrifice truth of rep-

resentation to the transient effectiveness which is readily secured by indulgence in declamation. One sometimes wonders that the master of so many languages should be content to express himself with such rigid economy of word and phrase in the one he learned at his mother's knee. Among Taylor's minor poems it is difficult to select those which exhibit his genius at its topmost point. Perhaps "Camadeva" may be instanced as best showing his power of blending exquisite melody with serene, satisfying, uplifting thought. The song which begins with the invocation, "Daughter of Egypt, veil thine eyes!" is as good as could be selected from his many pieces to indicate the energy and healthiness of his lyric impulse. His longer poems would reward a careful criticism. The best of them is "The Masque of the Gods" — a poem comprehensive in conception, noble in purpose, and admirable in style. Taylor has also done a great work in translating, or rather transfusing, the two parts of Goethe's "Faust" into various English metres corresponding to the original German verse, literal not only in reproducing ideas, but in reproducing melodies. This long labor could only have been undertaken by an American man of letters whose love of lucre was entirely subordinate to his love of literature.

Another American writer who has made literature a profession is George William Curtis. Mr. Curtis opened a new vein of satiric fiction in "The Potiphar Papers," "Prue and I," and "Trumps;" but probably the great extent of his popularity is due to his

papers in "Harper's Magazine," under the general title of the Editor's Easy Chair. In these he has developed every faculty of his mind and every felicity of his disposition; the large variety of the topics he has treated would alone be sufficient to prove the generous breadth of his culture; but it is in the treatment of his topics that his peculiarly attractive genius is displayed in all its abundant resources of sense, knowledge, wit, fancy, reason, and sentiment. His tone is not only manly, but gentlemanly; his persuasiveness is an important element of his influence; and no reformer has equalled him in the art of insinuating sound principles into prejudiced intellects by putting them in the guise of pleasantries. He can on occasion send forth sentences of ringing invective; but in the Easy Chair he generally prefers the attitude of urbanity which the title of his department suggests. His style, in addition to its other merits, is rhythmical; so that his thoughts slide, as it were, into the reader's mind in a strain of music. Not the least remarkable of his characteristics is the undiminished vigor and elasticity of his intelligence, in spite of the incessant draughts he has for years been making upon it.

In the domain of history and biography American literature, during the past fifty years, can boast of works of standard value. The most indefatigable of all explorers into the unpublished letters and documents illustrating the history of the United States was Jared Sparks. His voluminous editions of "The

Life and Writings of Washington and Franklin," his "Diplomatic Correspondence of the Revolution," and other books devoted to the task of adding to the authentic materials of American history, are mines of information to the students of history; but Mr. Sparks, though a clear and forcible writer, had not the gift of attractiveness; and the results of his investigations have been more popularly presented by Irving in his "Life of Washington," and Parton in his "Life of Franklin," than by his own biographies of those eminent men, based on the results of tireless original research extending through many years.

In the political history of the country there only remain two "families," in the English sense of the term. These are the Adamses and the Hamiltons. Charles F. Adams, Sr., has published a collection of his grandfather's works, in ten volumes, introduced by a life of John Adams, which is one of the most delightful of American biographies, and at the same time a positive addition to the early history of the United States under our first two Presidents. An edition of Hamilton's works has also been published; and one of Hamilton's sons has written a "History of the Republic of the United States," "as traced in the writings of Alexander Hamilton and of his contemporaries." It is needless to say that the controversies between the two families have added new matter of great value to the mass of documents which shed light on our early history as a united nation.

It would be tedious to enumerate other works, which are valuable contributions to our annals; but in 1834 George Bancroft appeared as *the* historian of the United States, or rather the historian of the process by which the States became united. He professed to have seized on the underlying Idea which shaped the destinies of the country; in later volumes he indicated his initiation in the councils of Providence; and though his last volume (the tenth), published in 1874, only brings the history down to the conclusion of the Revolutionary war, his labor of forty years has confirmed him in his historical philosophy. Bancroft has been prominent in American politics during all this period; he has been successively Collector of the port of Boston, Secretary of the Navy, American Minister in London and Berlin, and has thus enjoyed every possible advantage of correcting his declamation by his experience; but his tendency to rhapsody has not diminished with the increase of his knowledge and his years. He has, to be sure, availed himself of every opportunity to add to the materials which enter into the composition of American history, and has been as indefatigable in research as confident in theorizing. The different volumes of his work are of various literary merit, but they are all stamped by the unmistakable impress of the historian's individuality. There is no dogmatism more exclusive than that of fixed ideas and ideals, and this dogmatism Mr. Bancroft exhibits throughout his history both in its declamatory and speculative

form. Indeed, there are chapters in each of his volumes which, considered apart, might lead one to suppose that the work was misnamed, and that it should be entitled, "The Psychological Autobiography of George Bancroft, as Illustrated by Incidents and Characters in the Annals of the United States." Generally, however, his fault is not in suppressing or overlooking facts, but in disturbing the relations of facts, — substituting their relation to the peculiar intellectual and moral organization of the historian to their natural relations with each other. Still, he has written the most popular history of the United States (up to 1782) which has yet appeared, and has made a very large addition to the materials on which it rests. Perhaps he would not have been so tireless in research had he not been so passionately earnest in speculation.

The necessarily slow progress of Mr. Bancroft's history, and the various protests against his theories and his judgments, impelled Richard Hildreth, — a bold, blunt, hard-headed, and resolute man, caustic in temper, keen in intellect, indefatigable in industry, and blessed with an honest horror of shams, — to write a history of the United States in which our fathers should be presented exactly as they were, "unbedaubed with patriotic rouge." The first volume was published in 1849, the sixth in 1852. The whole work included the events between the discovery and colonization of the continent and the year 1821. As a book of reference, this history still remains as the best

in our catalogues of works on American history. The style is concise, the facts happily combined, the judgments generally good; and while justice is done to our great men, there is everywhere observable an almost vindictive contempt of persons who have made themselves "great" by the arts of the demagogue. Hildreth studied carefully all the means of information within his reach; but his plan did not contemplate original research on the large scale in which it was prosecuted by Bancroft.

The "History of New England," by John G. Palfrey, is distinguished by thoroughness of investigation, fairness of judgment, and clearness and temperance of style. It is one of the ablest contributions as yet made to our colonial history. The various histories of Francis Parkman — "The Conspiracy of Pontiac," "The Pioneers of France in the New World," "The Jesuits in North America," "The Discovery of the Great West" — exhibit a singular combination of the talents of the historian with those of the novelist. The materials he has laboriously gathered are disposed in their just relations by a sound understanding, while they are vivified by a realizing mind. The result is a series of narratives in which accuracy in the slightest details is found compatible with the most glowing exercise of historical imagination, and the use of a style singularly rapid, energetic, and picturesque.

William H. Prescott had one of those happily constituted natures in which intellectual conscientiousness

is in perfect harmony with the moral quality which commonly monopolizes the name of conscience. He was as incapable of lies of the brain as of lies of the heart. When he undertook to write histories, he employed an ample fortune to obtain new materials, sifted them with the utmost care, weighed opposing statements in an understanding which was unbiassed by prejudice, and, suppressing the laborious processes by which he had arrived at definite conclusions, presented the results of his toil in a narrative so easy, limpid, vivid, and picturesque that his delighted readers hardly realized that what was so pleasing and instructive to them could have cost much pain and labor to him. Echoes beyond the Atlantic, coming from England, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, gradually forced the conviction into the ordinary American mind that the historian of Ferdinand and Isabella, of the conquerors of Mexico and Peru, of Philip the Second, had in his quiet Boston home made large additions to the history of Europe in one of its most important epochs. Humboldt was specially emphatic in his praise. Prescott was enrolled among the members of many foreign academies, whose doors were commonly shut to all who could not show that they had made contributions to human knowledge as well as to human entertainment. Much of his foreign reputation was doubtless due to his lavish expenditure of money to obtain rare books and copies of rare manuscripts which contained novel and important facts; but his wide popularity is to be re-

ferred to his possession of the faculty or historical imagination, — that is, his power of realizing and reproducing the events and characters of past ages, and of becoming mentally a contemporary of the persons whose actions he narrated. His partial blindness, which compelled him to listen rather than to read, and to employ a cunningly contrived apparatus in order to write, was in his case an advantage. He had the eyes of friends and faithful secretaries eager to serve him. What passed into his ear became an image in his mind, and his bodily infirmity quickened his mental sight. His judgment and imagination brooded over the throng of details to which he listened; he formed a mental picture out of the dry facts; and by assiduous thinking he disposed the facts in their right relations without losing his hold on their vitality as pictures of a past age. People who passed him in his daily afternoon walks around Boston Common knew that his thoughts were busy on Ferdinand, or Cortez, or Pizarro, or Philip, and not on the news of the day; and his rapid pace and the peculiar swing of his cane as he trudged on indicated that he was looking not on what was imperfectly present to his bodily eye, but on objects to which physical exercise had given new life and significance as surveyed by the eye of his mind. His intense absorption in the subject-matter of his various histories gave to them a peculiar attractiveness which few novels possess. Anybody who, after reading Lew Wallace's recent romance of "The Fair

God," or Dr. Bird's "Calavar," will then turn to Prescott's "History of the Conquest of Mexico," cannot fail to be impressed with the historian's superiority to the romancer in the mere point of romantic interest.

Another American historian, John Lothrop Motley, the author of "The Rise of the Dutch Republic," "The History of the United Netherlands," "The History of John of Barneveld," and, it is to be hoped, of the great Thirty Years' War, has been, like Prescott, untiring in research, has made large additions to the facts of European history, has decisively settled many debatable questions which have tried the sagacity of French and German historians of the sixteenth century, and has poured forth the results of his researches in a series of impassioned narratives, which warm the blood and kindle the imagination as well as inform the understanding. His histories are, in some degree, epics. As he frequently crosses Prescott's path in his presentation of the ideas, passions, and persons of the sixteenth century, it is curious to note the serenity of Prescott's narrative as contrasted with the swift, chivalric impatience of wrong which animates almost every page of Motley. Both imaginatively reproduce what they have investigated; both have the eye to see and the reason to discriminate; both substantially agree in their judgment as to events and characters; but Prescott quietly allows his readers, as a jury, to render their verdict on the statement of the facts, while Motley somewhat fiercely

pushes forward to anticipate it. Prescott calmly represents; Motley intensely feels. Prescott is on a watch-tower surveying the battle; Motley plunges into the thickest of the fight. In temperament no two historians could be more apart; in judgment they are identical. As both historians are equally incapable of lying, Motley finds it necessary to overload his narrative with details which justify his vehemence, while Prescott can afford to omit them, on account of his reputation for a benign impartiality between the opposing parties. A Roman Catholic disputant would find it hard to fasten a quarrel on Prescott; but with Motley he could easily detect an occasion for a duel to the death. It is to be said that Motley's warmth of feeling never betrays him into intentional injustice to any human being; his histories rest on a basis of facts which no critic has shaken. And to the merit of being a historian of wide repute it is to be added that he has ever been a stanch friend, in the emergencies of the politics of the country, to every cause based on truth, honor, reason, freedom, and justice. The same high chivalrous tone which rings through his histories has been heard in every crisis of his public career.

The European histories of Prescott and Motley required an introduction, and this was furnished by John Foster Kirk, in his "History of Charles the Bold." Mr. Kirk was one of the ablest, most scholarly, and most enthusiastic of Prescott's secretaries. He had the sagacity to perceive the importance of the

period of which he proposed to write the history, and the perseverance to execute the difficult task. Charles and Louis were known to all people who spoke the English tongue by Scott's famous novel of "Quentin Durward," and his feebler concluding romance of "Anne of Geierstein;" and Mr. Kirk had a right to suppose that an account of an important era of European history would lose none of its attractiveness by being rigidly conformed to historical facts. As to his research, it is sufficient to say that in his investigations in the archives of Switzerland alone he was probably the first man to disturb the dust which nearly four centuries had heaped on precious manuscript documents. As a thinker he is always ingenious, and as generally sound as he is original. In narrative, the richness of his materials, as in the case of Motley, tempts him sometimes into seemingly needless minuteness of detail.

Among other works which do credit to the historical literature of the country may be named "The Life and Correspondence of Nathaniel Greene," from original materials, by George W. Greene, — a work which, of its kind, is of the first class. The same writer's "Historical View of the American Revolution" is an excellent compend drawn from original sources. The various volumes of Richard Frothingham are admirable for accuracy and research. On the general subject of history, the elaborate work of Dr. John W. Draper, "The History of the Intellectual Development of Europe," is comprehensive in

scope, brilliant in style, and bold in speculation. The first volume of "The History of France," by Parke Godwin, is so good that it is to be regretted the author has not continued his task. The various biographies written by James Parton — namely, the lives of Burr, Jackson, Franklin, and Jefferson — have the great merit of being entertaining, while they rest on a solid basis of facts which the writer has diligently explored. His love of paradox, though a fault, certainly gives piquancy to his lucid narrative. He starts commonly with a peculiar theory, and if sometimes unjust, the injustice comes from his surveying the subject from an eccentric point of view, and not from any deliberate intention to misstate facts or disturb their relations. "The Life of Josiah Quincy," by his son Edmund Quincy, is an admirably executed portrait of one of the stoutest specimens of political manhood in American history. Like Parton, Quincy interests by reproducing the period of which he writes, and, like him, is a painter of "interiors." "The Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America," by Henry Wilson, is the work of a man who as Senator of the United States was long in the thick of the fight against slavery, who knew by experience the thoughts, passions, and policies of the parties in the contest, and who wrote the history of the contest with simplicity, earnestness, and impartiality. "The Life of Madison," by William C. Rives, is a work of interest and value. Among the antiquarians and anecdotists who have illustrated American history

the highest reputation belongs to Benson J. Lossing and the family of the Drakes.

In military history and biography, the most notable work the country has produced is "Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman, Written by Himself" — or, as it might be called, "My Deeds in My Words." The sharpness, conciseness, and arbitrariness of the autobiographer's style are characteristic of the man. He is intensely conscious of his superiority. The word of command is heard ringing in every page of his two octavos. No man could, without being laughed at, have written what he has written unless he had done what he has done. Throughout his autobiography he appears self-centred, self-referring, self-absorbed, and, when opposed, prouder than a score of Spanish hidalgos. Like George Eliot's innkeeper, he divides human thought into two parts; namely, "my idee," and "humbug," — there is no middle point; but then his intelligence is as solid, quick, broad, and full of resource as his will is defiantly self-reliant. Though there is something bare, bleak, harsh, abrupt, in his style, his blunt egotism every now and then runs into a rude humor. He pats on the back men as brave if not as skilful as himself, and looks down upon them with good-natured toleration as long as they look up to him; but when they do not, disbelief in Sherman denotes incompetency or malignity in the critic. His enmities are hearted, and sometimes vindictive. The grave has closed over a man who in his sphere did at least as much as Sherman to overturn

the Rebellion, and yet Sherman spares not Secretary Stanton dead any more than he spared Stanton living. Still, the book is thoroughly a soldier's book, and must take a rank among the most instructive and entertaining military memoirs ever written.

In that department of history which describes the rise and growth of literatures, the most important work which has been produced by an American scholar is "The History of Spanish Literature," by George Ticknor. As far as solid and accurate learning is concerned, it is incomparably the best history of Spanish literature in existence, and is so acknowledged in Spain. The author, in his travels in Europe, sought out every book which shed the slightest light on his great subject. The materials of his work are a carefully selected Spanish library, purchased by himself. He deliberately took up the subject as a task which would pleasingly occupy a lifetime. The latest edition, published shortly after his death, showed that the volumes always were on his desk for supervision, revision, and the introduction of new facts, and that he continued pruning and enlarging his work to the day when the pen dropped from his hand. In research he was as indefatigable as he was conscientious; and possessing ample leisure and fortune, he tranquilly exerted the powers of his strong understanding and the refinements of his cultivated taste in forming critical judgments, which, if somewhat positive, had the positiveness of knowledge and reflection. Besides, his culture was cosmopolitan;

he had enjoyed as wide opportunities for conversing with men as with books, and there was hardly an illustrious European scholar or man of letters of his time with whom he had not been on terms of intimacy. But erudition cannot confer insight, nor can genius be communicated by mere companionship with it. Mr. Ticknor's defect was a lack of sympathy and imagination, and to the historian of literature nothing can compensate for a deficiency in these. He could not mentally transform himself into a Spaniard, and therefore could not penetrate into the secret of the genius of Spain. He studied its great writers, but he did not look into and behold their souls. There was something cold, hard, resisting, and repellent in his mind. His criticism, therefore, externally judicious, had not for its basis mental facts vividly conceived and vitally interpreted. Had Mr. Ticknor possessed the realizing imagination of his friend Prescott, — who was never in Spain, — he would have made what is now a valuable work also a work of fascinating interest and extensive popularity.

In the department of history may be included works on the origin, progress, organization, comparison, and criticism of the religious ideas of various nations. Three works of this kind have been produced in the United States during the past twenty years, each of which indicates a "liberal" bias. The first is "The History of the Doctrine of a Future Life," by William R. Alger. This is a mine of generalized information, obtained by great labor, and sifted, analyzed, and classi-

fied with care and skill. Indeed, it is said that some of the author's acquaintances, knowing the comprehensiveness of the plan, and seeing year after year pass by without any signs of approaching publication, gently hinted to him that the book, as he was writing it, would only be finished in that state of existence which it took for its theme. The second is "Oriental Religions," by Samuel Johnson, the product of a learned, intelligent, and intrepid "Free Religionist." The third is "Ten Great Religions," by James Freeman Clarke. The boldness of the thinking in these works is as noticeable as the abundance of the knowledge.

The number of American statesmen who since 1810 have combined literary with political talent is numerous, — so numerous, indeed, that in despair of doing justice to all, we are forced to select three representative men as indicating three separate tendencies in our national life. These are John C. Calhoun, Daniel Webster, and Charles Sumner. Calhoun specially followed the Jefferson who prompted the Resolutions of '98; Sumner, the Jefferson who wrote the Declaration of Independence; Webster, the men who drew up and carried into effect the Constitution of the United States. Calhoun was in politics what Calvin was in theology, — a great deductive reasoner from premises assumed. The austerity of his character found a natural outlet in the rigor of his logic. He had the grand audacity of the intellectual athlete, pushed his argumentation to its most extreme results,

was willing to peril life and fortune on an inference ten times removed from his original starting-point, and was always a reasoning being in matters where he seemed to be, on practical grounds, an unreasonable one. Despising rhetoric, he became a rhetorician of a high class by pure force of logical statement. Every word he used meant something, and he never indulged in an image or illustration except to condense or enforce a thought. In the discussions in the Senate of the United States regarding the very foundations of the government, raised by what is called "Foote's Resolution," Webster in 1830 made his celebrated speech in reply to Hayne. In all the resources of the orator — statement, reasoning, wit, humor, imagination, passion — this speech has, like one of the masterpieces of Burke, acquired reputation as a literary work, as well as by its lucid exposition of constitutional law. Webster was so completely victorious over his antagonist in argument as well as eloquence, that only when the question of nullification came up was his triumph seriously questioned. Calhoun, who thought that Hayne had not made the most of the argument for State rights, introduced in January, 1833, a series of resolutions into the Senate, carefully modelled on the Resolutions of '98, and afterward based an argument upon them as though they were of a validity equal to that of the Constitution itself. The speech was one of the most remarkable efforts of his ingenious, penetrating, and logical mind, and can now be studied with admiration by everybody

who enjoys following the processes of impassioned deductive reasoning on a question affecting the life of individuals and of States.

Webster's reply, called "The Constitution not a Compact between Sovereign States," was his greatest intellectual effort in the sphere of pure argumentation. Calhoun, a greater reasoner than Jefferson or Madison, had deduced from their propositions — originally thrown out to serve as a convenient cover for a somewhat factious opposition to the administration of John Adams — a theory of the government of the United States for all time to come. Webster resolutely attacked the premises of Calhoun's speech, and paid little attention to his opponent's deductive reasoning from the premises. Calhoun retorted in a speech in which he complained that Webster had not answered his argument. It was not Webster's policy to discredit Madison, and he simply declared that Madison, in his old age, had repudiated such inferences as Calhoun had drawn from the Resolutions of '98. On constitutional grounds Webster was as triumphant in his contest with Calhoun as he had been in his previous contest with Hayne; but arguments are of small account against interests and passions, and it required the bloodiest and most expensive of civil wars to prove that strictly logical deductions from the Resolutions of '98 did not express the meaning of the Constitution of the United States. The victory intellectually won was eventually decided by "blood and iron." In addition to Webster's extraordinary power

of lucid statement, on which he based the successive steps and wide sweep of his argumentation, he was master of an eloquence unrivalled of its kind, because it represented the kindling into unity of all the faculties and emotions of a strong, deep, and broad individual nature. Generally, understanding was his predominant quality; in statement and argument he seemed to be specially desirous to unite thought with facts; he distrusted all rhetoric which disturbed the relations of things; but in the heat of controversy he occasionally mounted to the real elevation of his character, and threw off flashes and sparks of impassioned imagination which had the electric, the smiting effect of a completely roused nature. It is curious that he never exhibited the higher qualities of imagination in his speeches until the suppressed power flamed unexpectedly out after all his other faculties had been thoroughly kindled, and then it came with formidable effect. That Webster is one of the most eminent of our prose writers is acknowledged both at the North and the South. He was also a magnificent specimen of physical manhood; his mere presence in an assembly was eloquence; and when he spoke, voice and gesture added immensely to the effect of his majestic port and bearing. Fox said of Lord Chancellor Thurlow that he must be an impostor, for no man could be as wise as he looked. Webster was wiser in look than even Thurlow, but his works show that he was no impostor in the matter of political wisdom, laughable as are some of the epithets by which his admirers

exaggerated his claims to reverence, as though he had clapped copyright on political thought. In the heathenism of partisan feeling, however, few deities of party were more worthy of apotheosis than "the god-like Dan!"

Up to 1850, when he made his memorable "7th of March speech" in the Senate, Webster was considered the leading champion of the non-extension of slavery; but in that speech he waived the application of the principle to the Territories acquired by the Mexican war, though he contended that he still adhered to the principle itself. He lost by this concession his hold on the minds and consciences of the political anti-slavery men, and the position he vacated was eventually occupied by Charles Sumner, though Sumner had numerous competitors for that station of glory and difficulty. Webster must have foreseen the inevitable conflict between the Slave and Free States, but he labored to postpone a catastrophe he was powerless to prevent, thinking that judicious compromise might soften the shock when the collision of irreconcilable principles and persons could no longer be avoided. Sumner in heart was as earnest an Abolitionist as Garrison or Phillips; his soul was on fire with moral enthusiasm; but he also had a vigorous understanding, and a memory stored with a vast amount of historical and legal knowledge. He never forgot anything he had read, and he passed not a day without reading. Accordingly, when he entered the Senate of the United States, this philanthropic stu-

dent-statesman was as ready in citing the precedents as he was fiery in declaring the principles of freedom. During the years preceding the Civil War the dominant party in the government was bent on establishing a slave-power, which, had it succeeded, would have disgraced the country forever. Law, logic, philosophy, even theology, were in the South all subordinated to the permanence and extension of negro slavery, and hundreds of sermons south of Mason and Dixon's line inculcated the refreshing doctrine that if Christ came primarily on earth to save sinners, his secondary, though not less important, object was to enslave "niggers." It is easy to say that it requires no parade of authorities to settle the proposition that two and two make four, but ethically and politically this was the proposition that Charles Sumner had to sustain by quotations from Vico and Leibnitz, from Coke, Mansfield, Camden, and Eldon, from Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Marshall, Story, and Webster. Those who were foiled in their purposes by these quotations from authorities they could not but respect called him a pedant; but what really vexed them was that in no case in which this pedant encountered an opponent did he fail to justify his course by the extent of his knowledge, as well as by the keenness of his intellect and the warmth of his sentiments. When the Civil War broke out, he saw that negro slavery was doomed. In his endeavors to hasten emancipation he always contrived to make himself unacceptable to the more prudent statesmen of his own party,

by inaugurating measures which the course of events eventually compelled them to adopt; and after the war he dragged the Republican party up to his own policy of reconstruction, being in most cases only some six or twelve months ahead of what sober and judicious Republicans found at length to be the wisest course. Throughout his career Sumner was felt as a force as well as an intelligence, and probably the future historian will rank him high among the select class of American public men who have the right to be called creative statesmen. He always courted obloquy, not only when his party was depressed, but when it was triumphant. "Forward!" was ever his motto. When his political friends thought they had at last found a resting-place, his voice was heard crying loudly for a new advance. Many of his addresses belong to that class of speeches which are events. His collected works, carefully revised by himself, have now become a portion of American literature. They quicken the conscience of the reader, but they also teach him the lesson that moral sentiment is of comparatively small account unless it hardens into moral character, and is also accompanied by that thirst for knowledge by which intellect is broadened and enriched, and is trained to the task of supporting by facts and arguments what the insight of moral manliness intuitively discerns. Probably no statesman that the country has produced has exceeded Sumner in his passion for rectitude. In every matter that came up for discussion he vehemently put the

question, "Which of the two sides is Right?" He so persistently capitalized this tremendous monosyllable, and poured into its utterance such an amount of moral fervor or moral wrath, that the modest word, which everybody used without much regard to its meaning, blazed out in his rhetoric, not as a feeble and faded truism, but as a dazzling and smiting truth.

A word may be said here of two public men, one of whom belongs to literature by cultivation and of set purpose, the other accidentally and in the ordinary discharge of his public duties. Edward Everett was one of the most variously accomplished of the American scholars who have been drawn into public life by ambition and patriotism. Though he attained high positions, his nature was too sensitive and fastidious for the rough contentions of party, and he could not steel himself to bear calumny without wincing. He suffered exquisite mortification and pain at unjust attacks on his principles and character, whereas such attacks awakened in Sumner a kind of exultation, as they proved that his own blows were beginning to tell. As an orator, Everett's special gift was persuasion, not invective. The four volumes of his collected works are, in elegance and energy of style, wealth of information, and fertility of thought, important contributions to American literature; but being mostly in the form of speeches and addresses, they have not produced the impression which less learning, talent, and eloquence, concentrated on a few subjects, would assuredly have made. A very different man was

Abraham Lincoln. He was a great rhetorician without knowing it. The statesman was doubtless astonished that messages and letters, written for purely practical purposes, should be hailed by fastidious critics as remarkable specimens of style. The truth was that Lincoln was deficient in fluency; he was compelled to wring his expression out of the very substance of his nature and the inmost life of the matter he had in hand; and the result was seen in sinewy sentences, in which thoughts were close to things, and words were close to thoughts. And finally, in November, 1863, his soul devoutly impressed with the solemnity and grandeur of his theme, he delivered at Gettysburg an address of about twenty lines, which is considered the top and crown of American eloquence.

There are certain writers in American literature who charm by their eccentricity as well as by their genius, who are both original and originals. The most eminent, perhaps, of these was Henry D. Thoreau — a man who may be said to have penetrated nearer to the physical heart of Nature than any other American author. Indeed, he "experienced" nature as others are said to experience religion. Lowell says that in reading him it seems as "if all out-doors had kept a diary, and become its own Montaigne." He was so completely a naturalist that the inhabitants of the woods in which he sojourned forgot their well-founded distrust of man, and voted him the freedom of their city. His descriptions excel even those of

Wilson, Audubon, and Wilson Flagg, admirable as these are, for he was in closer relations with the birds than they, and carried no gun in his hand. In respect to human society, he pushed his individuality to individualism; he was never happier than when absent from the abodes of civilization, and the toleration he would not extend to a Webster or a Calhoun he extended freely to a robin or a woodchuck. With all this peculiarity, he was a poet, a scholar, a humorist, — also, in his way, a philosopher and philanthropist; and those who knew him best, and entered most thoroughly into the spirit of his character and writings, are the warmest of all the admirers of his genius. Another Concord hermit is W. E. Channing, who has adopted solitude as a profession, and seclusion from his kind as the condition of independent perception of nature. The thin volume of poems in which he has embodied his insights and experiences contains lines and verses which are remarkable both for their novelty and depth. A serener eccentric, A. Bronson Alcott, is eccentric only in this, — that he thinks the object of life is spiritual meditation; that all action leads up to this in the end; and he has spent his life in tranquilly exploring those hidden or elusive facts of the higher consciousness which practical thinkers overlook or ignore. He is a Yankee seer, who has suppressed every tendency in his Yankee nature toward "argufying" a point. Very different from all these is Walt Whitman, who originally burst upon the lite-

rary world as "one of the roughs," and whose "barbaric yawp" was considered by a particular class of English critics as the first original note which had been struck in American poetry, and as good as an Indian war-whoop. Wordsworth speaks of Chatterton as "the marvellous boy;" Walt Whitman, in his first "Leaves of Grass," might have been styled the marvellous "b'hoy." Walt protested against all convention, even all forms of conventional verse; he seemed to start up from the ground, an earth-born son of the soil, and put to all cultivated people the startling question, "What do you think of Me?" They generally thought highly of him as an original. Nothing is more acceptable to minds jaded with reading works of culture than the sudden appearance of a strong, rough book, expressing the habits, ideas, and ideals of the uncultivated; but, unfortunately, Whitman declined to listen to the suggestion that his daring disregard of convention should have one exception, and that he must modify his frank expression of the relations of the sexes. The author refused, and the completed edition of the "Leaves of Grass" fell dead from the press. Since that period he has undergone new experiences; his latest books are not open to objections urged against his earliest; but still the "Leaves of Grass," if thoroughly cleaned, would even now be considered his ablest and most original work. But when the first astonishment subsides of such an innovation as Walt Whitman's, the innovator pays the penalty of undue admiration by

unjust neglect. This is true also of Joaquin Miller, whose first poems seemed to threaten all our established reputations. Each succeeding volume was more coldly received; and though the energy and glow of his verse were the same, the public, in its calmer mood, found that the richness of the matter was not up to the rush of the inspiration.

This eccentric deviation from accredited models is perhaps best indicated in American humorists, whose characteristic is ludicrous absurdity. George H. Derby (or John Phœnix) was perhaps the first who carried the hyperboles of humor to the height of humoristic extravaganzas. The peculiarity of the whole school is to revel in the most fantastic absurdities of an ingenious fancy. There is a Western story told of a man who was so strong that his shadow once falling on a child instantly killed it. This is the kind of humor in which Americans excel. Charles F. Brown (Artemas Ward), indulging at his will in the oddest and wildest caricatures, still contrived to make his showman an original character, and to stamp on the popular imagination an image of the man, as well as to tickle the risibilities of the public by his sayings and doings. Perhaps the most delicious among his many delicious absurdities was his grave statement that it had been better than ten dollars in Jeff Davis's pocket "if he'd never been born." S. L. Clemens (Mark Twain), the most widely popular of this class of humorists, is a man of wide experience, keen intellect, and literary culture. The serious portions of

his writings indicate that he could win a reputation in literature even if he had not been blessed with a humorous fancy inexhaustible in resource. He strikes his most effective satirical blows by an assumption of helpless innocence and bewildered forlornness of mind. The reader or the audience is in convulsions of laughter, while he preserves an imperturbable serenity of countenance, as if wondering why his statement is not received as an important contribution to human knowledge. Occasionally he indulges in a sly and subtle stroke of humor, worthy of the great masters, and indicating that his extravagancies are not the limit of his humorous faculty. D. R. Locke (Petroleum V. Nasby) is not only a humorist, but he was a great force in carrying the reconstruction measures of the Republican party after the war, by his laughable but coarse, broad, and merciless pictures of the lowest elements in the Western States that had been opposed to the policy of equal justice. Charles G. Leland, an accomplished man of letters, the best translator of the most difficult pieces of Heine, has won a large reputation by his "Hans Breitmann Ballads," Hans being a lyrist who sings seemingly from the accumulated inspiration drawn from tuns of lager beer. B. P. Shillaber, not so prominent as others we have named, has given a new life to Mrs. Partington, and has added Ike to the family. While he participates in the extravagance of the popular American humorists, he has a demure humane humor of his own which is quite charming.

Among those authors who combine humor with a variety of other gifts, the most conspicuous is F. Bret Harte. His subtilty of ethical insight, his depth of sentiment, his power of solid characterization, and his pathetic and tragic force are as evident as his broad perception of the ludicrous side of things. In his California stories, as in some of his poems, he detects "the soul of goodness in things evil," and represents the exact circumstances in which ruffians and profligates are compelled to feel that they have human hearts and spiritual natures. He is original not only in the ordinary sense of the word, but in the sense of discovering a new domain of literature, and of colonizing it by the creations of his own brain. Perhaps the immense popularity of some of his humorous poems, such as "The Heathen Chinee," has not been favorable to a full recognition of his graver qualities of heart and imagination.

John Hay is, like Bret Harte, a humorist, and his contributions, in "Pike County Ballads," to what may be called the poetry of ruffianism, if less subtile in sentiment and characterization than those of his model, have a rough raciness and genuine manliness peculiarly his own. His delightful volume called "Castilian Days," displaying all the graces of style of an accomplished man of letters, shows that it was by a strong effort of imagination that he became for a time a mental denizen of Pike County, and made the acquaintance of Jim Bludso and other worthies of that kind.

The writings of William D. Howells are masterpieces of literary workmanship, resembling the products of those cunning artificers who add one or two thousand per cent to the value of their raw material by their incomparable way of working it up. What they are as artisans, he is as artist. His faculties and emotions are in exquisite harmony with each other, and unite to produce one effect of beauty and grace in the singular felicity of his style. He has humor in abundance, but it is thoroughly blended with his observation, fancy, imagination, and good sense. He has revived in some degree the lost art of Addison, Goldsmith, and Irving. Nobody ever "roared" with laughter in reading anything he ever wrote; but few of our American humorists have excelled him in the power to unseal, as by a magic touch, those secret interior springs of merriment which generally solace the soul without betraying the happiness of the mood they create by any exterior bursts of laughter. His "Venetian Life," "Italian Journeys," "Suburban Sketches," —his novels, entitled "Our Wedding Journey," "A Chance Acquaintance," and "A Foregone Conclusion,"—all indicate the presence of this delicious humorous element, penetrating his picturesque descriptions of scenery, as well as his refined perceptions of character and pleasing narratives of incidents.

Charles Dudley Warner, like Howells, is an author whose humor is intermixed with his sentiment, understanding, and fancy. In "My Summer in a Garden," "Back-log Studies," and other volumes, he exhibits a

reflective intellect under the guise of a comically sedate humor. Trifles are exalted into importance by the incessant play of his meditative facetiousness.

Thomas Bailey Aldrich first won his reputation as a poet. In the exquisite ballad of "Babie Bell," and in other poems, he has, as it were, so dissolved thought and feeling in melody that rhyme and rhythm seem to be necessary and not selected forms of expression. As a prose writer he combines pungency with elegance of style, and in his stories has exhibited a sly original vein of humor, which, while it steals out in separate sentences, is most effectively manifested in the ludicrous shock of surprise which the reader experiences when he comes to the catastrophe of the plot. In this respect "Marjorie Daw" is one of the best prose tales in our literature.

Among the American novelists who have risen into prominence during the past thirty years, the greatest, though not the most popular, is Nathaniel Hawthorne. His first romance, "The Scarlet Letter," did not appear until the year 1850, but previously he had published collections of short stories under the titles of "Twice-told Tales" and "Mosses from an Old Manse." These were recognized by judicious readers all over the country as masterpieces of literary art, but their circulation was ludicrously disproportioned to their merit. For years one of the greatest modern masters of English prose was valued at his true worth only by those who had found by experience in composition how hard it is to be clear and simple in style, and at

the same time to be profound in sentiment, exact in thought, and fertile in imagination. Most of these short stories contain the germs of romances, and a literary economist of his materials, like Scott or Dickens, would have expanded Hawthorne's hints of passion and character into thrilling novels. "The Scarlet Letter," the romance by which Hawthorne first forced himself on the popular mind as a genius of the first class, was but the expansion of an idea expressed in three sentences, written twenty years before its appearance, in the little sketch of "Endicott and the Cross," which is included in the collection of "Twice-told Tales." But "The Scarlet Letter" exhibited in startling distinctness all the resources of his peculiar mind, and even more than Scott's "Bride of Lammermoor" it touches the lowest depths of tragic woe and passion — so deep, indeed, that the representation becomes at times almost ghastly. If Jonathan Edwards, turned romancer, had dramatized his sermon on "Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God," he could not have written a more terrific story of guilt and retribution than "The Scarlet Letter." The pitiless intellectual analysis of the emotions of guilty souls is pushed so far that the reader, after being compelled to sympathize with the Puritanic notion of Law, sighs for some appearance of the consoling Puritanic doctrine of Grace. Hawthorne, in fact, was a patient observer of the operation of spiritual laws, and relentless in recording the results of his observations. Most readers of romances are ravenous

for external events; they demand that the heroes and heroines shall be swift in thought, confident in decision, rapid in act. In Hawthorne's novels the events occur in the hearts and minds of his characters, and our attention is fastened on the ecstasies or agonies of individual souls rather than on outward acts and incidents; at least, the latter appear trivial in comparison with the inward mental states they imperfectly express. Carlyle says that real genius in characterization consists in developing character from "within outward." Hawthorne's mental sight in discerning souls is marvellously penetrating and accurate, but he finds it so difficult to give them an adequate physical embodiment that their very flesh is spiritualized, and appears to be brought into the representation only to give a kind of phantasmal form to purely mental conceptions. These souls, while intensely realized as individuals, are, however, mere puppets in the play of the spiritual forces and laws behind them, and while seemingly gifted with will, even to the extent of indulging in all the caprices of wilfulness, they drift to their doom with the certainty of fate. In this twofold power of insight into souls, and of the spiritual laws which regulate both the natural action and morbid aberrations of souls, Hawthorne is so incomparably great that in comparison with him all other romancers of the century, whether German, French, English, or American, seem to be superficial. The defect of his method was that he penetrated to such a depth into the human heart, and recorded so

mercilessly its realities and possibilities of sin and selfishness as they appeared to his piercing, passionless vision of the movements of passion, that he rather frightened than pleased the ordinary novel-reader. The old woman who sagely concluded that she must be sick, because in reading the daily newspaper she did not, as was her wont, "enjoy her murders," unconsciously hit on the distinction which separates artistic representations of human life which include crime and misery from those representations in which the prominence of crime and misery is so marked as to become unpalatable. Hawthorne did not succeed in making his psychological pictures of sin and woe "enjoyable." The intensity of impassioned imagination which flames through every page of "The Scarlet Letter" was unrelieved by those milder accompaniments which should have been brought in to soften the effect of a tragedy so awful in itself. Little Pearl, one of the most exquisite creations of imaginative genius, is introduced not to console her parents, but in her wild, innocent wilfulness to symbolize their sin, and add new torments to the slow-consuming agonies of remorse. In "The House of the Seven Gables," "The Blithedale Romance," and "The Marble Faun," Hawthorne deepened the impression made by his previous writings that he did not possess his genius, but was possessed *by* it. The most powerful of his creations of character were inspired not by his sympathies, but his antipathies. Personally he was the most gentle and genial and humane of men. He detested

many of the characters in whose delineation he exerted the full force of his intellect and imagination; but he was so mentally conscientious that he never exercised the right of the novelist to kill the personages who displeased him at his own will and pleasure. So intensely did he realize his characters that to run his pen through them, and thus blot them out of existence, would have seemed to him like the commission of wilful murder. He watched and noted the operation of spiritual laws on the malignant or feeble souls he portrayed, but never interfered personally to divert their fatal course. In thus emphasizing the tragic element in Hawthorne's genius, we may have too much overlooked his deep and delicate humor, his ingenuity of playful fancy, his felicity in making a landscape visible to the soul as well as the eye by his charming power of description, and the throng of thoughts which accompany every step in the progress of his narrative. Not the least remarkable characteristic of this remarkable man was the prevailing simplicity, clearness, sweetness, purity, and vigor of his style, even when his subjects might have justified him in deviating into some form of *Carlylese*.

The most widely circulated novel ever published in this country, or perhaps in any other, is "Uncle Tom's Cabin," by Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe. The book has in the United States attained a sale of over three hundred and fifty thousand copies, and after the lapse of twenty-four years the demand for it still continues. It has been translated into almost every known lan-

guage. Inspired by the insurrection of the public conscience against the Fugitive Slave Law, its popularity has survived the extinction of slavery itself. Its original publication, in 1852, was an important political event. It practically overturned the arguments of statesmen and decisions of jurists by an irresistible appeal to the heart and imagination of the American people. It was one of the most powerful agencies in building up the Republican party, in electing Abraham Lincoln to the Presidency, and in raising earnest volunteers for the great crusade against slavery. This effect was produced not by explosions of moral wrath against the iniquity it assailed, but by a vivid dramatic presentation of the facts of the case, in which complete justice was done equally to the slave-holder and the slave. And the humor, the pathos, the keen observation, the power of characterization, displayed in the novel, were all penetrated by an imagination quickened into activity by a deep and humane religious sentiment. Next to "Uncle Tom," "The Minister's Wooing" is the best of Mrs. Stowe's novels. Her "Oldtown Folks" and "Sam Lawson's Stories" are full of delightful Yankee humor.

It is impossible for us to spare the space for even an inadequate notice of all the novelists of the United States. At the time (1827) Miss Catherine M. Sedgwick published "Hope Leslie" she easily took a prominent position in our literature, in virtue not only of her own merits, but of the comparative absence of competitors. Since then there has appeared

a throng of writers of romantic narratives, and the number is constantly increasing. We are compelled to confine our remarks to a few of the representative novelists. William Ware gained a just reputation by his "Letters from Palmyra" (1836). The style is elegant, the story attractive, and the pictures of the court of Zenobia are represented through a visionary medium which gives to the representation a certain charming poetic remoteness. Charles Fenno Hoffman, a poet as well as prose writer, whose song of "Sparkling and Bright" has probably rung over the emptying of a million of champagne bottles, was a man who delighted in "wild scenes in forest and prairie," and whose "Greyslaer" shows the energy of his nature, as well as the brilliancy of his intellect. R. B. Kimball is noted for his business novels, and his heart-breaks come not from failures in love, but from failures in traffic. Donald G. Mitchell, in his "Reveries of a Bachelor," originated a new style, in which a certain delightful daintiness of sentiment was combined with a fertile fancy and touches of humorous good sense. Sylvester Judd, a Unitarian clergyman, went into the great lumber region of Maine, and came out of it to record his observations, experiences, and insights in the novel of "Margaret," which Lowell once affirmed to be the most intensely *American* book ever written. Thomas W. Higginson, distinguished in many departments of literature for the thoroughness of his culture and the classic simplicity and elegance of his style, is the author of a novel called

"Malbone," quite notable for beauty of description, ingenuity of plot, and subtilty of characterization. Herman Melville, after astonishing the public with a rapid succession of original novels, the scene of which was placed in the islands of the Pacific, suddenly dropped his pen, as if in disgust of his vocation. Mrs. Harriet Prescott Spofford is the author of many thrilling stories, written in a style of perhaps exaggerated splendor, but in which prose is flushed with all the hues of poetry. Maria S. Cummins published in 1854 a novel called "The Lamplighter," which attained an extraordinary popularity, owing to the simplicity, tenderness, pathos, and naturalness of the first hundred pages. Seventy thousand copies were sold in a year. Miss E. S. Phelps, in her "Gates Ajar," "Hedged In," and in a variety of minor tales, has exhibited a power of intense pathos which almost pains the reader it melts. Henry James, Jr. — long may it be before the "Jr." is detached from his name! — has a deep and delicate perception of the internal states of exceptional individuals, and a quiet mastery of the resources of style, which make his stories studies in psychology as well as models of narrative art. J. W. De Forest, the author of "Kate Beaumont" and other novels, is a thorough realist, whose characterization, animated narrative, well-contrived plots, and pitiless satire only want the relief of ideal sentiment to make them as pleasing as they are powerful. Edward Everett Hale, the author of "The Man without a Country," "My Double, and How He

Undid Me," and "Sybaris and Other Homes," is fantastically ingenious in the plan and form of his narratives, but he uses his ingenuity in the service of good sense and sound feeling, while he inspires it with the impulses of a hopeful, vigorous, and elastic spirit. Miss Louisa M. Alcott, in her "Little Women" and "Little Men," has almost revolutionized juvenile literature by the audacity of her innovations. She thoroughly understands that peculiar element in practical youthful character which makes romps of so many girls and "roughs" of so many boys. Real little women and real little men look into her stories as into mirrors in order to get an accurate reflection of their inward selves. She has also a tart, quaint, racy, witty good sense, which acts on the mind like a tonic. Her success has been as great as her rejection of conventionality in depicting lads and lasses deserved. Mrs. A. D. T. Whitney has more sentiment and a softer manner of representation than Miss Alcott; but she has originality, though of a different kind; and her books, like those of Miss Alcott, have penetrated into households in every part of the country, and their characters have been domesticated at thousands of firesides. Faith Gartney, especially, is a real friend and acquaintance to many a girl who has no other. William G. Simms, the most prolific of American historical novelists, and in tireless intellectual energy worthy of all respect, failed to keep his hold on the popular mind by the absence in his vividly described scenes of adventure of that

peculiar something which gives to such scenes a permanent charm. Theodore Winthrop, the author of "Cecil Dreeme," "John Brent," and other striking and admirable tales, rose suddenly into popularity, and as suddenly declined — a conspicuous instance of the instability of the romancer's reputation. J. G. Holland has succeeded in everything he has undertaken, whether as a sort of lay preacher to the young, as an essayist, as a novelist, or as a poet. It is hardly possible to take up any late edition of any one of his numerous volumes without finding "fortieth thousand" or "sixtieth thousand" smiling complacently and benignly upon you from the titlepage. Mrs. Mary J. Holmes, the author of "Lena Rivers," Mrs. Terhune (Marian Harland), the author of "Hidden Path," Mrs. Augusta Evans Wilson, the author of "St. Elmo," are novelists very different from Dr. Holland, yet whose works have obtained a circulation corresponding in extent. We pause here in reading the list, not for want of subjects, but for want of space, and also, it must be confessed, for want of epithets.

It is a great misfortune that the temptation which besets clever people to write mediocre verses, and afterward to collect them in a volume, is irresistible. Time, and short time at that, proves the truth of Mr. Jonathan Oldbuck's remark, that "your fugitive poetry is apt to become stationary with the publisher." Even when a little momentary reputation is acquired, the writers are soon compelled to repeat

mournfully the refrain of Pierpont's beautiful and pathetic poem, "Passing away! passing away!" It is not one of the least mysteries of this mismanagement of talent that the want of public recognition does not appease the desire to attain it. As a general rule, books of verses, even good verses, are the most unsalable of human products. There are numerous cases where genuine poetic faculty and inspiration fail to make the slightest impression on the public imagination. The most remarkable instance of this kind in our literature is found in the case of Mrs. Maria Brooks (Maria del Occidente), who printed some forty years ago a poem called "Zophiel; or, The Bride of Seven," which Southey warmly praised, which was honored with a notice in the "London Quarterly Review," which deserved most of the eulogy it received, which fell dead from the press, and which not ten living Americans have ever read. Again, some of the most popular and most quoted poems in our literature are purely accidental hits, and their authors are rather nettled than pleased that their other productions should be neglected while such prominence is given to one. Thus it might be somewhat dangerous now to compliment T. W. Parsons for his "Lines on a Bust of Dante," because he has become sick of praise confined to that piece, while the delicate beauty of scores of his other poems and his noble rhymed translation of Dante's "Inferno" find few readers. Miss Lucy Larcom, when she pictured "Hannah Binding Shoes," did not dream that Hannah was to

draw away attention from her other heroines, and concentrate it upon herself. Freneau's "Indian Burying-Ground" is the only piece of that poet which survives. "The Gray Forest Eagle" of A. B. Street has screamed away attention from his "rippling of waters and waving of trees" — from his hundreds of pages of descriptive verse which are almost photographs of natural scenery. People quote the "Summer in the Heart" and "A Life on the Ocean Wave" of Epes Sargent, and overlook many better specimens of his melody and his imagination. There are some poems which almost everybody has read, which are commonly considered the only poems of the writers. Such are "The Star-spangled Banner," by F. S. Key; "Woodman, Spare that Tree" (very insipid, by the way), by George P. Morris; "A Hymn," by Joseph H. Clinch; "The Baron's Last Banquet" and "Old Grimes is Dead," by A. G. Greene; "My Life is like the Summer Rose," by R. H. Wilde; "Sweet Home," by John Howard Payne; "The Christmas Hymn," by E. H. Sears; "The Old Oaken Bucket," by Samuel Woodworth; "Milton's Prayer of Patience," by Elizabeth Lloyd Howell; "The Relief of Lucknow," by Robert Lowell; "The Old Sergeant," by Forceythe Wilson; "The Vagabonds," by J. T. Trowbridge; and "Gnosis," by C. P. Cranch. There are other pieces, like the "Count Paul," and especially the "Theodora," of Mrs. Drinker (Edith May), which seem to be more deserving of success than some of those which have attained it. But little justice has

been done to the poetic and dramatic talent of George H. Boker. "The King's Bell," exquisite for the limpid flow of its verse and the sweetly melancholy tone of its thought, together with other poems by Richard Henry Stoddard, have not received their due meed of praise. T. Buchanan Read wrote volumes of rich descriptive poetry, but the popularity of "Sheridan's Ride" is not sufficient to attract attention to them.

In thus commenting on the instability and uncertainty of the public taste in respect to poets, we have unconsciously indicated quite an excellent body of American poetry, and we may proceed with the enumeration.

W. W. Story, famous as a sculptor, is also a poet, who throws into verse the same energy of inspiration which is so obvious in his statues. Mrs. Frances S. Osgood had a singularly musical nature, and her poems sing of themselves. She did not appear to feel the fetters of rhyme; she danced in them. Her poems, however, have the thinness of substance which often accompanies quickness of sensibility and activity of fancy. As it is, the reader rises from the perusal of her poems with a delicious melody in his ears, a charming feeling in his heart, and with but few thoughts in his head. Mrs. M. J. Preston has a more robust intellect, greater intensity of feeling, and more force of imagination than Mrs. Osgood, though lacking her lovely grace and bewitching melodiousness; but Mrs. Osgood could not have written a poem

so deeply pathetic as "Keeping His Word." Henry Timrod and Paul H. Hayne are, with Mrs. Preston, the most distinguished poets of the South. Timrod's ode, sung on the occasion of decorating the graves of the Confederate dead, is, in its simple grandeur, the noblest poem ever written by a Southern poet. Hayne exhibits in all his pieces a rich sensuousness of nature, a seemingly exhaustless fertility of fancy, an uncommon felicity of poetic description, and an easy command of the harmonies of verse. John G. Saxe owes his wide acceptance with the public not merely to the elasticity of his verse, the sparkle of his wit, and the familiarity of his topics, but to his power of diffusing the spirit of his own good humor. The unctuous satisfaction he feels in putting his mood of merriment into rhyme is communicated to his reader, so that, as it were, they laugh joyously together. Edmund Clarence Stedman, in addition to his merits as a critic of poetry, has written poems which stir the blood as well as quicken the imagination. Such, among others, are "John Brown of Osawatomie" and "Kearney at Seven Pines." Perhaps the finest recent examples of exquisitely subtile imagination working under the impulse of profound sentiment are to be found in the little volume entitled "Poems by H. H." (Mrs. Helen Hunt).

We have space only to mention the names of Jones Very, Celia Thaxter, Mrs. Lippincott (Grace Greenwood), H. H. Brownell, Will Carleton (author of "Farm Ballads"), Alice and Phœbe Cary, and

Mrs. L. C. Moulton, though each would justify a detailed criticism.

The limits of this essay do not admit the mention of every author who is worthy of notice. The reader must be referred for details to the various volumes of Dr. R. W. Griswold, to the "Cyclopedia of American Literature," by E. A. and G. L. Duyckinck, to the useful "Manual of American Literature," by Dr. John S. Hart, and the excellent "Hand-Book of American Literature," by F. H. Underwood. Still, before concluding, it may be well to mention some names without which even so limited a view of American literature as the present would be incomplete. And first, honor is due to Henry T. Tuckerman, who for nearly forty years was the associate of American authors, and who labored year after year to diffuse a taste for literature by his articles in reviews and magazines. He belonged to the class of appreciative critics, and was never more pleased than when he exercised the resources of a cultivated mind to analyze, explain, and celebrate the merits of others. Richard Grant White, a critic of an austerer order, has for some time been engaged literally in a war of words. In the *minutiæ* of English philology he has rarely met an antagonist he has not overthrown. In these encounters he has displayed wit, learning, logic, a perfect command of his subject, an imperfect command of his temper. The positiveness of his statements, however, seems always to come from the certainty of his knowledge. In his admirable edition of Shakspeare, and in his

"Life and Genius of Shakspeare," he has exhibited his rare critical faculty at its best. Henry N. Hudson, also an editor, biographer, and critic of Shakspeare, has specially shown his masterly power of analysis in commenting on the characters of the dramatist. Henry Giles, in two or three volumes of biography and criticism, has proved that clear perceptions, nice distinctions, and sound sense can be united with a rush of eloquence which seems too rapid for the pausing doubt of discriminating judgment. S. A. Allibone's "Dictionary of Authors," with its forty-six thousand names, is one of those prodigies of labor which excite not only admiration but astonishment. George P. Marsh, one of the most widely accomplished of American scholars, is principally known as the author of "Lectures on the English Language" and of "The English Language and Early English Literature," both critical works of a high class. The greatest comparative philologist the country has produced, William D. Whitney, has, like Max Müller, in England, popularized some of the results of his investigations in an admirable volume on "Language, and the Study of Language."

The theological literature of the United States covers so wide a field that it would be wild to attempt to characterize here even its eminent representatives. We can give only a few names. Henry Ward Beecher, the most widely renowned pulpit and platform orator of the country, is more remarkable for the general largeness and opulence of his nature than for the

possession of any exceptional power of mind or extent of acquisition. As a theological scholar, or, indeed, as a trained and accurate writer, nobody would think of comparing him with Francis Wayland, or Leonard Bacon, or Edwards A. Park, or Frederick H. Hedge. In depth of spiritual insight, though not in depth of spiritual emotion, he is inferior to Horace Bushnell, Cyrus A. Bartol, and many other American divines. He feels spiritual facts intensely; he beholds them with wavering vision. But his distinction is that he is a formidable, almost irresistible, moral force. His influence comes from the conjoint and harmonious action of his whole blood and brain and will and soul, and his magnetism being thus both physical and mental, he communicates his individuality in the act of radiating his thoughts, and thus "Beecherizes" his readers as he "Beecherizes" his audiences. He overpowers where he fails to convince. The reader, but especially the listener, is brought into direct contact or collision not only with a thinker and a stirrer-up of the emotions, but with a strong, resolute, intrepid man. As Emerson would say, he could mob a mob, and compel it to submit. This continual sense of conscious power impels him into many imprudences and indiscretions, and stamps on what he says, and what he writes, and what he does, a character of haste and extemporaneousness. No man could throw off such an amount of intellectual work as he performs, who thought comprehensively or who thought deeply; for the comprehensive thinker hesitates, the

deep thinker doubts; but hesitation and doubt are foreign to Mr. Beecher's intellectual constitution, and only intrude into his consciousness in those occasional reactions caused by the moral fatigue resulting now and then from his hurried, headlong intellectual movement. Observation, sense, wit, humor, fancy, sentiment, moral perception, moral might, are all included and fused in the large individuality whose mode of action we have ventured to sketch. Indeed, an impartial student of character, accustomed to penetrate into the souls of those he desires inwardly to know, to look at things from their point of view, and to interpret external evidence by the internal knowledge he has thus obtained, would say that Mr. Beecher was exactly the heedless, indiscreet man of religious genius likely to become the subject of such a scandal as has recently disgusted the country, and yet to be perfectly innocent of the atrocious crimes with which he was charged.

There are some books which it is difficult to class. Thus, Richard H. Dana, Jr., published some thirty years ago a volume called "Two Years Before the Mast," which became instantly popular, is popular now, and promises to be popular for many years to come. In reading it anybody can see that it is more than an ordinary record of a voyage, for there runs through the simple and lucid narrative an element of beauty and power which gives it the artistic charm of romance. Again, "Six Months in Italy," by George S. Hillard, and "Notes of Travel and Study in Italy,"

by Charles E. Norton, would be superficially classed among books of travel, but they are essentially works of literature, and their chief worth consists in descriptions of natural scenery, in pointed reflection, in delicate criticism of works of art. The volume entitled "White Hills," by Thomas Starr King, apparently intended merely to describe the mountain region of New Hampshire, is all aglow with a glad inspiration drawn from the ardent soul and teeming mind of the writer. Charles T. Brooks would generally be classed as a translator, but being a poet, he has so translated the novels of Richter that he has domesticated them in our language. Such translations are greater efforts of intelligence and imagination than many original works. Horace Mann's reports as secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education rank with legislative documents, yet they are really eloquent treatises, full of matter, but of matter burning with passion and blazing with imagery. "Substance and Shadow," by Henry James, might be classed either with theological or metaphysical works, were it not that the writer, while treating on the deepest questions which engage the attention of theologians and metaphysicians, stretches both theologians and metaphysicians on the rack of his pitiless analysis, and showers upon them all the boundless stores of his ridicule. Miss Mary A. Dodge (Gail Hamilton) might be styled an essayist, but that would be but a vague term to denote a writer who takes up all classes of subjects, is tart, tender, shrewish, pathetic, monitory, objurgatory, tol-

erant, prejudiced, didactic, and dramatic by turns, but always writing with so much point, vigor, and freshness that we can only classify her among "readable" authors. Margaret Fuller Ossoli, scholar, critic, teacher, translator, metaphysician, philanthropist, revolutionist, a pythoness in a transcendental coterie, a nurse in a soldiers' hospital, a martyr heroine on board a wrecked ship, — we can only say of her that she was a woman. There is a delightful book entitled "Yesterdays with Authors," by James T. Fields — a combination of gossip, biography, and criticism, but refusing to be ranked with either, and depending for its interest on the life-like pictures it presents of such men as Hawthorne, Dickens, and Thackeray in their hours of familiar talk and correspondence. There is also one work of such pretension that it should not be omitted here, namely, "Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy, based on the Doctrine of Evolution," by John Fiske. It is mainly a lucid exposition of the philosophy of Herbert Spencer, with the addition of original and critical matter. The breadth and strength of understanding, the fulness of information, the command of expression, in this book are worthy of all commendation. The curious thing in it is that the author thinks that a new religion is to be established on the coordination of the sciences; and of this religion, whose God is the "Unknowable," he is a pious believer.

In conclusion, we can only allude to the intellectual force, the various talents and accomplishments, employed in the leading newspapers of the country. Dur-

ing the past thirty years these journals have swarmed with all kinds of anonymous ability. Though the articles appeared to die with the day or week on which they were printed, they really passed, for good or evil, into the general mind as vital influences, shaping public opinion and forming public taste. It would be difficult, for example, to estimate the beneficent action on our literature of such a critic and scholar as George Ripley, who for many years directed the literary department of a widely circulated newspaper. The range of his learning was equal to every demand upon its resources; the candor of his judgment answered to the comprehensiveness of his taste; the catholicity of his literary sympathies led him to encourage every kind of literary talent on its first appearance; and he was pure from the stain of that meanest form of egotism which grudges the recognition of merit in others, as if such a recognition was a diminution of its own importance. The great development, during a comparatively recent period, of the magazine literature of the country has had an important effect in stimulating and bringing forward new writers, some of whom promise to more than fill the places which their elders will soon leave vacant. It would be presumptuous to anticipate the verdict of the next generation as to which of these will fulfil the expectations raised by their early efforts. That pleasant duty must be left to the fortunate person who shall note the Centennial Progress of American Literature in 1976.

DANIEL WEBSTER AS A MASTER OF ENGLISH STYLE.

FROM my own experience and observation I should say that every boy who is ready enough in spelling, grammar, geography, and arithmetic, is appalled when he is commanded to write what is termed "a composition." When he enters college the same fear follows him; and the Professor of Rhetoric is a more terrible personage to his imagination than the Professors of Greek, Latin, Mathematics, and Moral and Intellectual Philosophy. Both boys at school and young men in college show no lack of power in speaking their native language with a vehemence and fluency which almost stuns the ears of their seniors. Why, then, should they find such difficulty in writing it? When you listen to the animated talk of a bright school-boy or college student, full of a subject which really interests him, you say at once that such command of racy and idiomatic English words must of course be exhibited in his "compositions" or his "themes;" but when the latter are examined, they are commonly found to be feeble and lifeless, with hardly a thought or a word which bears any stamp of freshness or originality, and which are so inferior to

his ordinary conversation that we can hardly believe they came from the same mind.

The first quality which strikes an examiner of these exercises in English composition is their *falseness*. No boy or youth writes what he personally thinks and feels, but writes what a good boy or youth is expected to think or feel. This hypocrisy vitiates his writing from first to last, and is not absent in his "Class Oration," or in his "Speech at Commencement." I have a vivid memory of the first time the boys of my class, in a public school, were called upon to write "composition." The themes selected were the prominent moral virtues or vices. How we poor innocent urchins were tormented by the task imposed upon us! How we put more ink on our hands and faces than we shed upon the white paper on our desks! Our conclusions generally agreed with those announced by the greatest moralists of the world. Socrates and Plato, Cicero and Seneca, Cudworth and Butler, could not have been more austerely moral than were we little rogues, as we relieved the immense exertion involved in completing a single short baby-like sentence by shying at one companion a rule, or hurling at another a paper pellet intended to light plump on his forehead or nose. Our custom was to begin every composition with the proposition that such or such a virtue "was one of the greatest blessings we enjoy;" and this triumph of accurate statement was not discovered by our teacher to be purely mechanical, until one juvenile thinker, having

avarice to deal with, declared it to be "one of the greatest evils we enjoy." The whole thing was such a piece of monstrous hypocrisy, that I once timidly suggested to the schoolmaster that it would be well to allow me to select my own subject. The request was granted; and as narrative is the natural form of composition which a boy adopts when he has his own way, I filled, in less than half the time heretofore consumed in writing a quarter of a page, four pages of letter-paper with an account of my being in a ship taken by a pirate, of the heroic defiance I launched at the pirate captain, and the sagacity I evinced in escaping the fate of my fellow-passengers, in not being ordered to "walk the plank." The story, though trashy enough, was so much better than any of the moral essays of the other pupils, that the teacher commanded me to read it before the whole school, as an evidence of the rapid strides I had made in the art of "composition."

This falseness of thought and feeling is but too apt to characterize the writing of the student after he has passed from the common school to the academy or the college. The term "sophomorical" is used to describe speeches which are full of emotion which the speaker does not feel, full of words in four or five syllables that mean nothing, and, in respect to imagery and illustrations, blazing with the cheap jewelry of rhetoric, — with those rubies and diamonds that can be purchased for a few pennies an ounce. The danger is that this "sophomorical" style may continue to

afflict the student after he has become a clergyman, a lawyer, or a legislator.

Practical men who may not be "college educated" still have the great virtue of using the few words they employ as identical with facts. When they meet a man who has half the dictionary at his disposal, and yet gives no evidence of apprehending the real import and meaning of one word among the many thousands he glibly pours forth, they naturally distrust him, as a person who does not know the vital connection of all good words with the real things they represent. Indeed, the best rule that a professor of rhetoric could adopt would be to insist that no student under his care should use an unusual word until he had *earned the right to use it* by making it the verbal sign of some new advance in his thinking, in his acquirements, or in his feelings. Shakspeare, the greatest of English writers, — and perhaps the greatest of all writers, — required fifteen thousand words to embody all that his vast exceptional intelligence acquired, thought, imagined, and discovered; and he had earned the right to use every one of them. Milton found that eight thousand words could fairly and fully represent all the power, grandeur, and creativeness of his almost seraphic soul, when he attempted to express his whole nature in a literary form. All the words used by Shakspeare and Milton are *alive:* "cut them and they will *bleed.*" But it is ridiculous for a college student to claim that he has the mighty resources of the English language at his supreme disposal, when he has

not verified, by his own thought, knowledge, and experience, one in a hundred of the words he presumptuously employs.

Now, Daniel Webster passed safely through all the stages of the "sophomoric" disease of the mind, as he passed safely through the measles, the chicken-pox, and other eruptive maladies incident to childhood and youth. The process, however, by which he purified his style from this taint, and made his diction at last as robust and as manly, as simple and as majestic, as the nature it expressed, will reward a little study.

The mature style of Webster is perfect of its kind, being in words the express image of his mind and character, — plain, terse, clear, forcible; and rising from the level of lucid statement and argument into passages of superlative eloquence only when his whole nature is stirred by some grand sentiment of freedom, patriotism, justice, humanity, or religion, which absolutely lifts him, by its own inherent force and inspiration, to a region above that in which his mind habitually lives and moves. At the same time it will be observed that these thrilling passages, which the boys of two generations have ever been delighted to declaim in their shrillest tones, are strictly illustrative of the main purpose of the speech in which they appear. They are not mere purple patches of rhetoric, loosely stitched on the homespun gray of the reasoning, but they seem to be inwoven with it and to be a vital part of it. Indeed, we can hardly decide, in reading these magnificent bursts of eloquence in con-

nection with what precedes and follows them, whether the effect is due to the logic of the orator becoming suddenly morally impassioned, or to his moral passion becoming suddenly logical. What gave Webster his immense influence over the opinions of the people of New England was, first, his power of so "putting things" that everybody could understand his statements; secondly, his power of so framing his arguments that all the steps, from one point to another, in a logical series, could be clearly apprehended by every intelligent farmer or mechanic who had a thoughtful interest in the affairs of the country; and thirdly, his power of inflaming the sentiment of patriotism in all honest and well-intentioned men by overwhelming appeals to that sentiment, so that after convincing their understandings, he clinched the matter by sweeping away their wills.

Perhaps to these sources of influence may be added another which many eminent statesmen have lacked. With all his great superiority to average men in force and breadth of mind, he had a genuine respect for the intellect, as well as for the manhood, of average men. He disdained the ignoble office of misleading the voters he aimed to instruct; and the farmers and mechanics who read his speeches felt ennobled when they found that the greatest statesman of the country frankly addressed them, as man to man, without pluming himself on his exceptional talents and accomplishments. Up to the crisis of 1850, he succeeded in domesticating himself at most of the pious,

moral, and intelligent firesides of New England. Through his speeches he seemed to be almost bodily present wherever the family, gathered in the evening around the blazing hearth, discussed the questions of the day. It was not the great Mr. Webster, "the godlike Daniel," who had a seat by the fire. It was a person who talked *to* them, and argued *with* them, as though he was "one of the folks," — a neighbor dropping in to make an evening call; there was not the slightest trace of assumption in his manner; but suddenly, after the discussion had become a little tiresome, certain fiery words would leap from his lips and make the whole household spring to their feet, ready to sacrifice life and property for "the Constitution and the Union." That Webster was thus a kind of invisible presence in thousands of homes where his face was never seen, shows that his rhetoric had caught an element of power from his early recollections of the independent, hard-headed farmers whom he met when a boy in his father's house. The bodies of these men had become tough and strong in their constant struggle to force scanty harvests from an unfruitful soil, which only persistent toil could compel to yield anything; and their brains, though forcible and clear, were still not stored with the important facts and principles which it was his delight to state and expound. In truth, he ran a race with the demagogues of his time in an attempt to capture such men as these, thinking them the very backbone of the country. Whether he succeeded or failed, it would

be vain to hunt through his Works to find a single epithet in which he mentioned them with contempt. He was as incapable of insulting one member of this landed democracy, — sterile as most of their acres were, — as of insulting the memory of his father, who belonged to this class.

The late Mr. Peter Harvey used to tell with much zest a story illustrating the hold which these early associations retained on Webster's mind throughout his life. Some months after his removal from Portsmouth to Boston, a servant knocked at his chamber door late in an April afternoon in the year 1817, with the announcement that three men were in the drawing-room who insisted on seeing him. Webster was overwhelmed with fatigue, the result of his Congressional labors and his attendance on courts of law; and he had determined, after a night's sleep, to steal a vacation in order to recruit his energies by a fortnight's fishing and hunting. He suspected that the persons below were expectant clients; and he resolved, in descending the stairs, not to accept their offer. He found in the parlor three plain, country-bred, honest-looking men, who were believers in the innocence of Levi and Laban Kenniston, accused of robbing a certain Major Goodridge on the highway, and whose trial would take place at Ipswich the next day. They could find, they said, no member of the Essex Bar who would undertake the defence of the Kennistons, and they had come to Boston to engage the services of Mr. Webster. Would he go down to Ipswich and

defend the accused? Mr. Webster stated that he could not and would not go; he had made arrangements for an excursion to the sea-side; the state of his health absolutely demanded a short withdrawal from all business cares; and that no fee could tempt him to abandon his purpose. "Well," was the reply of one of the delegation, "it is n't the fee that we think of at all, though we are willing to pay what you may charge; but it 's justice. Here are two New Hampshire men who are believed in Exeter, Newbury, Newburyport, and Salem to be rascals; but we in Newmarket believe, in spite of all evidence against them, that they are the victims of some conspiracy. We think you are the man to unravel it, though it seems a good deal tangled even to us. Still, we suppose that men whom we know to have been honest all their lives can't have become such desperate rogues all of a sudden." "But I cannot take the case," persisted Mr. Webster; "I am worn to death with over-work; I have not had any real sleep for forty-eight hours. Besides, I know nothing of the case." "It 's hard, I can see," continued the leader of the delegation; "but you 're a New Hampshire man, and the *neighbors* thought that you would not allow two innocent New Hampshire men, however humble they may be in their circumstances, to suffer for lack of your skill in exposing the wiles of this scoundrel Goodridge. The *neighbors* all desire you to take the case." That phrase "the neighbors" settled the question. No resident of a city knows

what the phrase means. But Webster knew it in all the intense significance of its meaning. His imagination flew back to the scattered homesteads of a New England village, where mutual sympathy and assistance are the necessities, as they are the commonplaces, of village life. The phrase remotely meant to him the combination of neighbors to resist an assault of Indian savages, or to send volunteers to the war which wrought the independence of the nation. It specially meant to him the help of neighbor to neighbor, in times of sickness, distress, sorrow, and calamity. In his childhood and boyhood the Christian question, "Who is my neighbor?" was instantly solved the moment a matron in good health heard that the wife of Farmer A, or Farmer B, was stricken down by fever and needed a friendly nurse to sit by her bedside all night, though she had herself been toiling hard all day. Everything philanthropists mean when they talk of brotherhood and sisterhood among men and women was condensed in that homely phrase, "the neighbors." "Oh!" said Webster, ruefully, "if the neighbors think I may be of service, of course I must go;" — and, with his three companions, he was soon seated in the stage for Ipswich, where he arrived at about midnight. The court met the next morning; and his management of the case is still considered one of his masterpieces of legal acumen and eloquence. His cross-examination of Goodridge rivalled, in mental torture, everything martyrologists tell us of the physical agony endured

by the victim of the inquisitor, when roasted before slow fires or stretched upon the rack. Still, it seemed impossible to assign any motive for the self-robbery and the self-maiming of Goodridge, which any judge or jury would accept as reasonable. The real motive has never been discovered. Webster argued that the motive might have originated in a desire to escape from the payment of his debts, or in a whimsical ambition to have his name sounded all over Maine and Massachusetts as the heroic tradesman who had parted with his money only when overpowered by superior force. It is impossible to say what motives may impel men who are half-crazed by vanity, or half-demonized by malice. Coleridge describes Iago's hatred of Othello as the hatred which a base nature instinctively feels for a noble one, and his assignment of motives for his acts as the mere "motive-hunting of a motiveless malignity."

Whatever may have been Goodridge's motive in his attempt to ruin the innocent men he falsely accused, it is certain that Webster saved these men from the unjust punishment of an imputed crime. Only the skeleton of his argument before the jury has been preserved; but what we have of it evidently passed under his revision. He knew that the plot of Goodridge had been so cunningly contrived that every man of the twelve before him, whose verdict was to determine the fate of his clients, was inwardly persuaded of their guilt. Some small marked portions of the money which Goodridge swore he had on his

person on the night of the pretended robbery were found in their house. Circumstantial evidence brought their guilt with a seemingly irresistible force literally "home" to them. It was the conviction of the leaders of the Essex Bar that no respectable lawyer could appear in their defence without becoming in some degree their accomplice. But Webster, after damaging the character of the prosecutor by his stern cross-examination, addressed the jury, not as an advocate bearing down upon them with his arguments and appeals, but rather as a thirteenth juryman, who had cosily introduced himself into their company, and was arguing the case with them after they had retired for consultation among themselves. The simplicity of the language employed is not more notable than the power evinced in seizing the main points on which the question of guilt or innocence turned. At every quiet but deadly stab aimed at the theory of the prosecution, he is careful to remark that "it is for the jury to say under their oaths" whether such inconsistencies or improbabilities should have any effect on their minds. Every strong argument closes with the ever-recurring phrase, "It is for the jury to say;" and at the end the jury, thoroughly convinced, said, "Not guilty." The Kennistons were vindicated; and the public, which had been almost unanimous in declaring them fit tenants for the State prison, soon blamed the infatuation which had made them the accomplices of a villain in hunting down two unoffending citizens, and of denouncing every

lawyer who should undertake their defence as a legal rogue.

The detected scoundrel fled from the place where his rascality had been exposed, to seek some other locality where the mingled jeers and curses of his dupes would be unheard. Some twenty years after the trial, Mr. Webster, while travelling in Western New York, stopped at an obscure village tavern to get a glass of water. The hand of the man behind the bar, who gave it to him, trembled violently; and Webster, wondering at the cause, looked the fellow steadily in the eye. He recognized Goodridge, and understood at once that Goodridge had just before recognized *him*. Not a word passed between the felon and the intrepid advocate who had stripped his villany of all its plausible disguises; but what immense meaning must there have been in the swift interchange of feeling as their eyes met! Mr. Webster entered his carriage and proceeded on his journey; but Goodridge, — who has since ever heard of him?

This story is a slight digression, but it illustrates that hold on reality, that truth to fact, which was one of the sources of the force and simplicity of Mr. Webster's mature style. He, however, only obtained these good qualities of rhetoric by long struggles with constant temptations, in his early life, to use resounding expressions and flaring images which he had not earned the right to use. His Fourth of July oration at Hanover, when he was only eighteen, and his college addresses, must have been very bad in their dic-

tion if we can judge of them by the style of his private correspondence at the time. The verses he incorporates in his letters are deformed by all the faults of false thinking and borrowed expression which characterized contemporary American imitators of English imitators of Pope and Gray. Think of the future orator, lawyer, and senator writing, even at the age of twenty, such balderdash as this! —

> "And Heaven grant me, whatever luck betide,
> Be fame or fortune given or denied,
> Some cordial friend to meet my warm desire,
> Honest as John and good as Nehemiah."

In reading such couplets we are reminded of the noted local poet of New Hampshire (or was it Maine?) who wrote "The Shepherd's Songs," and some of whose rustic lines still linger in the memory to be laughed at, such, for instance, as these: —

> "This child who perished in the fire,—
> His father's name was Nehemiah."

Or these: —

> "Napoleon, that great ex*ile*,
> Who scoured all Europe like a file."

And Webster's prose was then almost as bad as his verse, though it was modelled on what was considered fine writing at the opening of the present century. He writes to his dearest student friends in a style which is profoundly insincere, though the thoughts are often good, and the fact of his love for his friends cannot be doubted. He had committed to

memory Fisher Ames's noble speech on the British Treaty, and had probably read some of Burke's great pamphlets on the French Revolution. The stripling statesman aimed to talk in their high tone and in their richly ornamented language, before he had earned the right even to mimic their style of expression. There is a certain swell in some of his long sentences, and a kind of good sense in some of his short ones, which suggest that the writer is a youth endowed with elevation as well as strength of nature, and is only making a fool of himself because he thinks he must make a fool of himself in order that he may impress his correspondents with the idea that he is a master of the horrible jargon which all bright young fellows at that time innocently supposed to constitute eloquence. Thus, in February, 1800, he writes thus to his friend Bingham: "In my melancholy moments I presage the most dire calamities. I already see in my imagination the time when the banner of civil war shall be unfurled; when Discord's hydra form shall set up her hideous yell, and from her hundred mouths shall howl destruction through our empire; and when American blood shall be made to flow in rivers by American swords! But propitious Heaven prevent such dreadful calamities! Internally secure, we have nothing to fear. Let Europe pour her embattled millions around us, let her thronged cohorts cover our shores, from St. Lawrence to St. Marie's, yet United Columbia shall stand unmoved; the *manes* of her deceased Washington shall

guard the liberties of his country, and direct the sword of freedom in the day of battle." And think of this, not in a Fourth of July oration, but in a private letter to an intimate acquaintance! The bones of Daniel Webster might be supposed to have moved in their coffin at the thought that this miserable trash — so regretted and so amply atoned for — should have ever seen the light; but it is from such youthful follies that we measure the vigor of the man who outgrows them.

It was fortunate that Webster, after he was admitted to the bar, came into constant collision, in the courts of New Hampshire, with one of the greatest masters of the common law that the country has ever produced, — Jeremiah Mason. It has been said that Mr. Mason educated Webster into a lawyer by opposing him. He did more than this; he cured Webster of all the florid foolery of his early rhetorical style. Of all men that ever appeared before a jury, Mason was the most pitiless realist, the most terrible enemy of what is — in a slang term as vile almost as itself — called "hifalutin;" and woe to the opposing lawyer who indulged in it! He relentlessly pricked all rhetorical bubbles, reducing them at once to the small amount of ignominious suds, which the orator's breath had converted into colored globes having some appearance of stability as well as splendor. Six feet and seven inches high, and corpulent in proportion, this inexorable representative of good sense and sound law stood, while he was arguing a case, "quite near

to the jury," says Webster, — "so near that he might have laid his finger on the foreman's nose; and then he talked to them in a plain conversational way, in short sentences, and using no word that was not level to the comprehension of the least educated man on the panel. This led me," he adds, "to examine my own style, and I set about reforming it altogether."

Mr. Mason was what the lawyers call a "cause-getting man," like Sir James Scarlett, Brougham's great opponent at the English bar. It was said of Scarlett that he gained his verdicts because there were twelve Scarletts in the jury-box; and Mason so contrived to blend his stronger mind with the minds of the jurymen, that his thoughts appeared to be theirs, expressed in the same simple words and quaint illustrations which they would have used if asked to give their opinions on the case. It is to be added that Mason's almost cynical disregard of ornament in his addresses to the jury gave to an opponent like Webster the advantage of availing himself of those real ornaments of speech which spring directly from a great heart and imagination. Webster, without ever becoming so supremely plain and simple in style as Mason, still strove to emulate, in his legal statements and arguments, the homely, robust common-sense of his antagonist; but wherever the case allowed of it, he brought into the discussion an element of *un*common sense, the gift of his own genius and individuality, which Mason could hardly comprehend sufficiently to controvert, but which was surely

not without its effect in deciding the verdicts of juries.

It is probable that Webster was one of the few lawyers and statesmen that Mason respected. Mason's curt, sharp, "vitriolic" sarcasms on many men who enjoyed a national reputation, and who were popularly considered the lights of their time, still remain in the memories of his surviving associates as things which may be quoted in conversation, but which it would be cruel to put into print. Of Webster, however, he never seems to have spoken a contemptuous word. Indeed, Mason, though fourteen years older than Webster, and fighting him at the Portsmouth bar with all the formidable force of his logic and learning, was from the first his cordial friend. That friendship, early established between strong natures so opposite in character, was never disturbed by any collision in the courts. In a letter written, I think, a few weeks after he had made that "Reply to Hayne" which is conceded to be one of the great masterpieces of eloquence in the recorded oratory of the world, Webster wrote jocularly to Mason: "I have been written to, to go to New Hampshire, to try a cause against you next August. . . . If it were an easy and plain case on our side, I might be willing to go; but I have some of your *pounding in my bones yet*, and I don't care about any more till that wears out."

It may be said that Webster's argument in the celebrated Dartmouth College Case, before the Supreme Court of the United States, placed him, at

the age of thirty-six, in the foremost rank of the constitutional lawyers of the country. For the main points of the reasoning, and for the exhaustive citation of authorities by which the reasoning was sustained, he was probably indebted to Mason, who had previously argued the case before the Superior Court of New Hampshire; but his superiority to Mason was shown in the eloquence, the moral power, he infused into his reasoning, so as to make the dullest citation of legal authority *tell* on the minds he addressed.

There is one incident connected with this speech which proves what immense force is given to simple words when a great man — great in his emotional nature as well as great in logical power — is behind the words. "It is, sir, as I have said, a small college. And yet there are those who love it." At this point the orator's lips quivered, his voice choked, his eyes filled with tears, — all the memories of sacrifices endured by his father and mother, his brothers and sisters, in order that he might enjoy its rather scanty advantages of a liberal education, and by means of which he was there to plead its cause before the supreme tribunal of the nation, rushed suddenly upon his mind in an overwhelming flood. The justices of the Supreme Court — great lawyers, tried and toughened by experience into a certain obdurate sense of justice, and insensible to any common appeal to their hearts — melted into unwonted tenderness, as in broken words the advocate proceeded to state his own indebtedness to the "small college" whose rights and privi-

leges he was there to defend. Chief Justice Marshall's eyes were filled with tears; and the eyes of the other justices were suffused with a moisture similar to that which afflicted the eyes of the Chief. As the orator gradually recovered his accustomed stern composure of manner, he turned to the counsel on the other side, — one of whom, at least, was a graduate of Dartmouth, — and in his deepest and most thrilling tones thus concluded his argument: "Sir, I know not how others may feel; but for myself, when I see my Alma Mater surrounded, like Cæsar in the senate-house, by those who are reiterating stab after stab, I would not, for this right hand, have her turn to me and say, *Et tu quoque, mi fili!* — And thou too, my son." The effect was overwhelming; yet by what simple means was it produced, and with what small expenditure of words! The eloquence was plainly "in the man, in the subject, and in the occasion," but most emphatically was it in the MAN.

Webster's extreme solicitude to make his style thoroughly *Websterian* — a style unimitated because it is in itself inimitable — is observable in the care he took in revising all his speeches and addresses which were published under his own authority. His great Plymouth oration of 1820 did not appear in a pamphlet form until a year after its delivery. The chief reason of this delay was probably due to his desire of stating the main political idea of the oration — that government is founded on property — so clearly that it could not be misconceived by any honest mind, and

could only be perverted from its plain democratic meaning by the ingenious malignity of such minds as are deliberately dishonest, and consider lying as justifiable when lying will serve a party purpose. It is probable that Webster would have been President of the United States had it not been for one short sentence in this oration, — "Government is founded on property." It was of no use for his political friends to prove that he founded on this general proposition the most democratic views as to the distribution of property, and advised the enactment of laws calculated to frustrate the accumulation of large fortunes in a few hands. There were the words, words horrible to the democratic imagination, and Webster was proclaimed an aristocrat, and an enemy to the common people. But the delay in the publication of the oration may also be supposed to have been due to his desire to prune all its grand passages of eloquence of every epithet and image which should not be rigorously exact as expressions of his genuine sentiments and principles. It is probable that the Plymouth oration, as we possess it in print, is a better oration, in respect to composition, than that which was heard by the applauding crowd before which it was originally delivered. It is certain that the largeness, the grandeur, the weight of Webster's whole nature, were first made manifest to the intelligent portion of his countrymen by this noble commemorative address.

Yet it is also certain that he was not himself altogether satisfied with this oration; and his dissatisfac-

tion with some succeeding popular speeches, memorable in the annals of American eloquence, was expressed privately to his friends in the most emphatic terms. On the day he completed his magnificent Bunker Hill oration, delivered on the 17th of June, 1825, he wrote to Mr. George Ticknor: "I did the deed this morning, that is, I finished my speech; and I am pretty well persuaded that it will *finish* me as far as reputation is concerned. There is no more tone in it than in the weather in which it has been written; it is perpetual dissolution and thaw." Every critic will understand the force of that word "tone." He seemed to feel that it had not enough robust manliness, — that the ribs and backbone, the facts, thoughts, and real substance of the address were not sufficiently prominent, owing to the frequency of those outbursts of magnetic eloquence which made the immense audience that listened to it half crazy with the vehemence of their applause. On the morning after he had delivered his eulogy on Adams and Jefferson, he entered his office with his manuscript in his hand, and threw it down on the desk of a young student at law whom he specially esteemed, with the request, "There, Tom, please to take that discourse, and weed out all the Latin words."

Webster's liking for the Saxon element of our composite language was, however, subordinate to his main purpose of self-expression. Every word was good, whether of Saxon or Latin derivation, which aided him to embody the mood of mind dominant at

the time he was speaking or writing. No man had less of what has been called "the ceremonial cleanliness of academical Pharisees;" and the purity of expression he aimed at was to put into a form, at once intelligible and tasteful, his exact thoughts and emotions. He tormented reporters, proof-readers, and the printers who had the misfortune to be engaged in putting one of his performances into type, not because this or that word was or was not Saxon or Latin, but because it was inadequate to convey perfectly his meaning. Mr. Kemble, a great Anglo-Saxon scholar, once, in a company of educated gentlemen, defied anybody present to mention a single Latin phrase in our language for which he could not furnish a more forcible Saxon equivalent. "The impenetrability of matter" was suggested; and Kemble, after half a minute's reflection, answered, "The un-thoroughfareableness of stuff." Still, no English writer would think of discarding such an abstract, but convenient and accurate, term as "impenetrability" for the coarsely concrete and terribly ponderous word which declares that there is no possible thoroughfare, no road, by which we can penetrate that substance which we call "matter," and which our Saxon forefathers called "stuff." Wherever the Latin element in our language comes in to express ideas and sentiments which were absent from the Anglo-Saxon mind, Webster uses it without stint; and some of the most resounding passages of his eloquence owe to it their strange power to suggest a certain vastness in his

intellect and sensibility, which the quaint, idiomatic, homely prose of his friend Mason would have been utterly incompetent to convey. Still, he preferred a plain, plump, simple verb or noun to any learned phrase, whenever he could employ it without limiting his opulent nature to a meagre vocabulary, incompetent fully to express it.

Yet he never departed from simplicity; that is, he rigidly confined himself to the use of such words as he had earned the right to use. Whenever the report of one of his extemporaneous speeches came before him for revision, he had an instinctive sagacity in detecting every word that had slipped unguardedly from his tongue, which he felt, on reflection, did not belong to *him*. Among the reporters of his speeches he had a particular esteem for Henry J. Raymond, afterwards so well known as the editor of the "New York Times." Mr. Raymond told me that after he had made a report of one of Webster's speeches, and had presented it to him for revision, his conversation with him was always a lesson in rhetoric. "Did I use that phrase? I hope not. At any rate, substitute for it this more accurate definition." And then again: "That word does not express my meaning. Wait a moment, and I will give you a better one. That sentence is slovenly, — that image is imperfect and confused. I believe, my young friend, that you have a remarkable power of reporting what I say; but if I said that, and that, and that, it must have been owing to the fact that I caught, in

the hurry of the moment, such expressions as I could command at the moment; and you see they do not accurately represent the idea that was in my mind." And thus, Mr. Raymond said, the orator's criticism upon his own speech would go on, — correction following correction, — until the reporter feared he would not have it ready for the morning edition of his journal.

Webster had so much confidence in Raymond's power of reporting him accurately, that when he intended to make an important speech in the Senate, he would send a note to him, asking him to come to Washington as a personal favor; for he knew that the accomplished editor had a rare power of apprehending a long train of reasoning, and of so reporting it that the separate thoughts would not only be exactly stated, but the relations of the thoughts to each other — a much more difficult task — would be preserved throughout, and that the argument would be presented in the symmetrical form in which it existed in the speaker's mind. Then would follow, as of old, the severe scrutiny of the phraseology of the speech; and Webster would give, as of old, a new lesson in rhetoric to the accomplished reporter who was so capable of following the processes of his mind.

The great difficulty with speakers who may be sufficiently clear in statement and cogent in argument is that turn in their discourse when their language labors to become figurative. Imagery makes palpable to the bodily eye the abstract thought seen only

by the eye of the mind; and all orators aim at giving vividness to their thinking by thus making their thoughts *visible*. The investigation of the process of imagination by which this end is reached is an interesting study. Woe to the speaker who is ambitious to rise into the region of imagination without possessing the faculty! Everybody remembers the remark of Sheridan when Tierney, the prosaic Whig leader of the English House of Commons, ventured to bring in, as an illustration of his argument, the fabulous but favorite bird of untrained orators, the phœnix, which is supposed always to spring up alive out of its own ashes. "It was," said Sheridan, "a poulterer's description of a phœnix." That is, Tierney, from defect of imagination, could not lift his poetic bird above the rank of a common hen or chicken.

The test that may be most easily applied to all efforts of the imagination is sincerity; for, like other qualities of the mind, it acts strictly within the limits of a man's character and experience. The meaning of the word "experience," however, must not be confined to what he has personally seen and felt, but is also to be extended to everything he has seen and felt through vital sympathy with facts, scenes, events, and characters, which he has learned by conversation with other men and through books. Webster laid great emphasis on conversation as one of the most important sources of imagery as well as of positive knowledge. "In my education," he once remarked to Charles Sumner, "I have found that conversation

with the intelligent men I have had the good fortune to meet has done more for me than books ever did; for I learn more from them in a talk of half an hour than I could possibly learn from their books. Their minds, in conversation, come into intimate contact with my own mind; and I absorb certain secrets of their power, whatever may be its quality, which I could not have detected in their works. Converse, *converse*, CONVERSE with living men, face to face, and mind to mind, — that is one of the best sources of knowledge."

But my present object is simply to give what may be called the natural history of metaphor, comparison, image, trope, and the like, whether imagery be employed by an uneducated husbandman, or by a great orator and writer. Many readers may recollect the anecdote of the New Hampshire farmer, who was once complimented on the extremely handsome appearance of a horse which he was somewhat sullenly urging on to perform its work. "Yaas," was the churlish reply, "the critter looks well enough, but then he is as slow as — as — as — well, as slow as cold molasses." This perfectly answers to Bacon's definition of imagination, as "thought immersed in matter." The comparison is exactly on a level with the experience of the person who used it. He had seen his good wife, on so many bitter winter mornings when he was eager for his breakfast, turn the molasses-jug upside down, and had noted so often the reluctance of the congealed sweetness to assume its

liquid nature, that the thing had become to him the visible image of the abstract notion of slowness of movement. An imaginative dramatist or novelist, priding himself on the exactness with which he represented character, could not have invented a more appropriate comparison to be put into the mouth of an imagined New England farmer.

The only objection to such rustic poets is that a comparatively few images serve them for a lifetime; and one tires of such "originals" after a few days' conversation has shown the extremely limited number of apt illustrations they have added to the homely poetry of agricultural life. The only person belonging to this class that I ever met, who possessed an imagination which was continually creative in quaint images, was a farmer by the name of Knowlton, who had spent fifty years in forcing some few acres of the rocky soil of Cape Ann to produce grass, oats, potatoes, and, it may be added, those ugly stone walls which carefully distinguish, at the Cape, one patch of miserable sterile land from another. He was equal, in quickness of imaginative illustration, to the whole crowd of clergymen, lawyers, poets, and artists, who filled the boarding-houses of Pigeon Cove; and he was absolutely inexhaustible in fresh and original imagery. On one hot summer day, — the continuation of fourteen hot summer days, — when there was fear all over Cape Ann that the usual scanty crops would be withered up by the intense heat, and the prayer for rain was in almost every farmer's heart,

I met Mr. Knowlton, as he was looking philosophically over one of his own sun-smitten fields of grass. Thinking that I was in full sympathy with his own feeling at the dolorous prospect before his eyes, I said, in accosting him, that it was bad weather for the farmers. He paused for half a minute; and then his mind flashed back on an incident of his weekly experience, — that of his wife "ironing" the somewhat damp clothes of the Monday's "washing," — and he replied: "I see you 've been talking with our farmers, who are too stupid to know what 's for their good. Ye see the spring here was uncommonly rainy, and the ground became wet and cold; but now, for the last fortnight, *God has been putting his flat-iron over it*, and 't will all come out right in the end."

Thus Mr. Knowlton went on, year after year, speaking poetry without knowing it, as Molière's Monsieur Jourdain found he had been speaking prose all his life without knowing it. But the conception of the sun as God's flat-iron, smoothing out and warming the moist earth, as a housewife smooths and warms the yet damp shirts, stockings, and bed-linen brought into the house from the clothes-lines in the yard, is an astounding illustration of that "familiar grasp of things Divine," which obtains in so many of our rustic households. Dante or Chaucer, two of the greatest poets of the world, would, had they happened to be "uneducated" men, have seized on just such an image to express their idea of the Divine beneficence.

This natural, this instinctive operation of the imaginative faculty is often observed in children. Numberless are the stories told by fond mothers of the wonderful things uttered by their babies shortly after they have left their cradles. The most striking peculiarity running through them all is the astonishing audacity with which the child treats the most sacred things. He or she seems to have no sense of awe. All children are taught to believe that God resides above them in the sky; and I shall never forget the shock of surprise I felt at the answer of a boy of five years — whom I found glorying over the treasures of his first paint-box — to my question: "Which color do you like best?" "Oh," he carelessly replied, "I like best sky-blue, — God's color." And the little rogue went on, daubing the paper before him with a mixture of all colors, utterly unconscious that he had said anything remarkable; and yet what Mrs. Browning specially distinguishes as the characteristic of the first and one of the greatest of English poets, Chaucer, — namely, his "familiar grasp of things Divine," — could not have found a more appropriate illustration than in this chance remark of a mere child, expressing the fearlessness of his faith in the Almighty Father above him.

Now, in all these instinctive operations of the imagination, whether in the mind of a child or in that of a grown man, it is easy to discern the mark of sincerity. If the child is petted, and urged by his mother to display his brightness before a company

of other mothers and other babies, he is in danger of learning early that trick of falsehood, which clings to him when he goes to school, when he leaves the school for the college, and when he leaves the college for the pursuits of professional life. The farmer or mechanic, not endowed with "college larnin'," is sure to become a bad declaimer, perhaps a demagogue, when he abandons those natural illustrations and ornaments of his speech which spring from his individual experience, and strives to emulate the grandiloquence of those graduates of colleges who have the heathen mythology at the ends of their fingers and tongues, and can refer to Jove, Juno, Minerva, Diana, Venus, Vulcan, and Neptune, as though they were resident deities and deesses of the college halls. The trouble with most "uneducated" orators is, that they become enamoured of these shining gods and goddesses after they have lost, through repetition, all of their old power to give point or force to any good sentence of modern oratory. During the times when, to be a speaker at Abolitionist meetings, the speaker ran the risk of being pelted with rotten eggs, I happened to be present, as one of a small antislavery audience, gathered in an equally small hall. Among the speakers was an honest, strong-minded, warm-hearted young mechanic, who, as long as he was true to his theme, spoke earnestly, manfully, and well; but, alas! he thought he could not close without calling in some god or goddess to give emphasis — after the method of college students — to his previous

statements. He selected, of course, that unfortunate phantom whom he called the Goddess of Liberty. "Here, in Boston," he thundered, "where she was cradled in Faneuil Hall, can it be that Liberty should be trampled under foot, when, after two generations have passed,—yes, sir, have elapsed,—she has grown —yes, sir, I repeat it, has grown—grown up, sir, into a great man?" The change in sex was, in this case, more violent than usual; but how many instances occur to everybody's recollection, where that poor Goddess has been almost equally outraged, through a puerile ambition on the part of the orator to endow her with an exceptional distinction by senseless rhodomontade, manufactured by the word-machine which he presumes to call his imagination! All imitative imagery is the grave of common-sense.

Now let us pass to an imagination which is, perhaps, the grandest in American oratory, but which was as perfectly natural as that of the "cold molasses," or "God's flat-iron," of the New England farmer,—as natural, indeed, as the "sky-blue, God's color," of the New England boy. Daniel Webster, standing on the heights of Quebec at an early hour of a summer morning, heard the ordinary morning drum-beat which called the garrison to their duty. Knowing that the British possessions belted the globe, the thought occurred to him that the morning drum would go on beating in some English post to the time when it would sound again in Quebec. Afterwards, in a speech on President Jackson's Pro-

test, he dwelt on the fact that our Revolutionary forefathers engaged in a war with Great Britain on a strict question of principle, "while actual suffering was still afar off." How could he give most effect to this statement? It would have been easy for him to have presented statistical tables, showing the wealth, population, and resources of England, followed by an enumeration of her colonies and military stations, all going to prove the enormous strength of the nation against which the United American colonies raised their improvised flag. But the thought which had heretofore occurred to him at Quebec happily recurred to his mind the moment it was needed; and he flashed on the imagination an image of British power which no statistics could have conveyed to the understanding, — "a power," he said, "which has dotted over the surface of the whole globe with her possessions and military posts; whose morning drum-beat, following the sun, and keeping company with the hours, circles the earth with one continuous and unbroken strain of the martial airs of England." Perhaps a mere rhetorician might consider superfluous the word "whole," as applied to "globe," and "unbroken," as following "continuous;" yet they really add to the force and majesty of the expression. It is curious that in Great Britain this magnificent impersonation of the power of England is so little known. It is certain that it is unrivalled in British patriotic oratory. Not Chatham, not even Burke, ever approached it in the

noblest passages in which they celebrated the greatness and glory of their country. Webster, it is to be noted, introduced it in his speech, not for the purpose of exalting England, but of exalting our Revolutionary forefathers, whose victory, after a seven years' war of terrible severity, waged in vindication of a principle, was made all the more glorious from having been won over an adversary so formidable and so vast.

It is reported that, at the conclusion of this speech on the President's Protest John Sergeant, of Philadelphia, came up to the orator, and after cordially shaking hands with him, eagerly asked, "Where, Webster, did you get that idea of the morning drumbeat?" Like other public men, accustomed to address legislative assemblies, he was naturally desirous of knowing the place — if place there was — where such images and illustrations were to be found. The truth was that, if Webster had ever read Goethe's "Faust," — which he of course never had done, — he might have referred his old friend to that passage where Faust, gazing at the setting sun, aches to follow it in its course forever. "See," he exclaims, "how the green-girt cottages shimmer in the setting sun! He bends and sinks, — the day is outlived. Yonder he hurries off, and quickens other life. Oh, that I have no wing to lift me from the ground, to struggle after — forever after — him! I should see, in everlasting evening beams, the stilly world at my feet, every height on fire, every vale in repose, the silver brook

flowing into golden streams. The rugged mountain, with all its dark defiles, would not then break my godlike course. Already the sea, with its heated bays, opens on my enraptured sight. Yet the god seems at last to sink away. But the new impulse wakes. I hurry on to drink his everlasting light, — *the day before me and the night behind*, — and under me the waves." In Faust, the wings of the mind follow the setting sun; in Webster, they follow the rising sun; but the thought of each circumnavigates the globe, in joyous companionship with the same centre of life, light, and heat, — though the suggestion which prompts the sublime idea is widely different. The sentiment of Webster, calmly meditating on the heights of Quebec, contrasts strangely with the fiery feeling of Faust, raging against the limitations of his mortal existence. A humorist, Charles Dickens, who never read either Goethe or Webster, has oddly seized on the same general idea: "The British Empire," — he says, in one of his novels, — "on which the sun never sets, and where the tax-gatherer never goes to bed."

This celebrated image of the British "drum-beat" is here cited simply to indicate the natural way in which all the faculties of Webster are brought into harmonious co-operation whenever he seriously discusses any great question. His understanding and imagination, when both are roused into action, always cordially join hands. His statement of facts is so combined with the argument founded on them, that

they are interchangeable; his statement having the force of argument, and his argument having the "substantiality" which properly belongs to statement; and to these he commonly adds an imaginative illustration, which gives increased reality to both statement and argument. In rapidly turning over the leaves of the six volumes of his Works, one can easily find numerous instances of this instinctive operation of his mind. In his first Bunker Hill oration he announces that "the *principle* of free governments adheres to the American soil. It is bedded in it, immovable as its mountains." Again he says: "A call for the representative system, wherever it is not enjoyed, and where there is already intelligence enough to estimate its value, is perseveringly made. Where men may speak out, they demand it; where the bayonet is at their throats, they pray for it." And yet again: "If the true spark of religious and civil liberty be kindled, it will burn. Human agency cannot extinguish it. Like the earth's central fire, it may be smothered for a time; the ocean may overwhelm it; mountains may press it down, — but its inherent and unconquerable force will heave both the ocean and the land, and at some time or other, in some place or other, the volcano will break out, and flame up to heaven." It would be difficult to find in any European literature a similar embodiment of an elemental sentiment of humanity, in an image which is as elemental as the sentiment to which it gives vivid expression.

And then with what majesty, with what energy, and with what simplicity, can he denounce a political transaction which, had it not attracted his ire, would hardly have survived in the memory of his countrymen! Thus, in his Protest against Mr. Benton's Expunging Resolution, speaking for himself and his Senatorial colleague, he says: "We rescue our own names, character, and honor from all participation in this matter; and whatever the wayward character of the times, the headlong and plunging spirit of party devotion, or the fear or the love of power, may have been able to bring about elsewhere, we desire to thank God that they have not, as yet, overcome the love of liberty, fidelity to true republican principles, and a sacred regard for the Constitution in that State whose soil was drenched to a mire by the first and best blood of the Revolution." Perhaps the peculiar power of Webster in condemning a measure by a felicitous epithet, such as that he employs in describing "the *plunging* spirit of party devotion" was never more happily exercised. In that word "plunging" he intended to condense all his horror and hatred of a transaction which he supposed calculated to throw the true principles of constitutional government into a bottomless abyss of personal government, where right constitutional principles would cease to have existence, as well as cease to have authority.

There is one passage in his oration at the completion of the Bunker Hill Monument which may be quoted as an illustration of his power of compact

statement, and which at the same time may save readers from the trouble of reading many excellent histories of the origin and progress of the Spanish dominion in America, condensing, as it does, all which such histories can tell us in a few smiting sentences. "Spain," he says, "stooped on South America like a vulture on its prey. Everything was force. Territories were acquired by fire and sword. Cities were destroyed by fire and sword. Hundreds of thousands of human beings fell by fire and sword. Even conversion to Christianity was attempted by fire and sword." One is reminded, in this passage, of Macaulay's method of giving vividness to his confident generalization of facts by emphatic repetitions of the same form of words. The repetition of "fire and sword" in this series of short, sharp sentences ends in forcing the reality of what the words mean on the dullest imagination; and the climax is capped by affirming that "fire and sword" were the means by which the religion of peace was recommended to idolaters, whose heathenism was more benignant, and more intrinsically Christian, than the military Christianity which was forced upon them.

And then again, how easily Webster's imagination slips in, at the end of a comparatively bald enumeration of the benefits of a good government, to vitalize the statements of his understanding! "Everywhere," he says, "there is order, everywhere there is security. Everywhere the law reaches to the highest, and reaches to the lowest, to protect all in their rights, and to re-

strain all from wrong; and over all hovers liberty, — that liberty for which our fathers fought and fell on this very spot, with her eye ever watchful, and her eagle wing ever wide outspread." There is something astonishing in the dignity given in the last clause of this sentence to the American eagle, — a bird so degraded by the rhodomontade of fifth-rate declaimers, that it seemed impossible that the highest genius and patriotism could restore it to its primacy among the inhabitants of the air, and its just eminence as a symbol of American liberty. It is also to be noted that Webster here alludes to "the bird of freedom" only as it appears on the American silver dollar that passes daily from hand to hand, where the watchful eye and the outspread wing are so inartistically represented that the critic is puzzled to account for the grandeur of the image which the orator contrived to evolve from the barbaric picture on the ugliest and clumsiest of civilized coins.

The compactness of Webster's statements occasionally reminds us of the epigrammatic point which characterizes so many of the statements of Burke. Thus, in presenting a memorial to Congress, signed by many prominent men of business, against President Jackson's system of finance, he saw at once that the Democrats would denounce it as another manifesto of the "moneyed aristocracy." Accordingly Webster introduced the paper to the attention of the Senate, with the preliminary remark: "The memorialists are not unaware that, if rights are attacked, attempts

will be made to render odious those whose rights are violated. Power always seeks such subjects on which to try its experiments." It is difficult to resist the impression that Webster must have been indebted to Burke for this maxim. Again we are deluded into the belief that we must be reading Burke, when Webster refers to the *minimum* principle as the right one to be followed in imposing duties on certain manufactures. "It lays the impost," he says, "exactly where it will do good, and leaves the rest free. It is an intelligent, discerning, discriminating principle; not a blind, headlong, generalizing, uncalculating operation. Simplicity, undoubtedly, is a great beauty in acts of legislation, as well as in the works of art; but in both it must be a simplicity resulting from congruity of parts and adaptation to the end designed; not a rude generalization, which either leaves the particular object unaccomplished, or, in accomplishing it, accomplishes a dozen others also, which were not desired. It is a simplicity wrought out by knowledge and skill; not the rough product of an undistinguishing, sweeping general principle."

An ingenuous reader, who has not learned from his historical studies that men generally act, not from arguments addressed to their understandings, but from vehement appeals which rouse their passions to defend their seeming interests, cannot comprehend why Webster's arguments against Nullification and Secession, which were apparently unanswerable, and which were certainly unanswered either by Hayne or

Calhoun, should not have settled the question in debate between the North and the South. Such a reader, after patiently following all the turns and twists of the logic, all the processes of the reasoning employed on both sides of the intellectual contest, would naturally conclude that the party defeated in the conflict would gracefully acknowledge the fact of its defeat; and, as human beings, gifted with the faculty of reason, would cheerfully admit the demonstrated results of its exercise. He would find it difficult to comprehend why the men who were overcome in a fair gladiatorial strife in the open arena of debate, with brain pitted against brain, and manhood against manhood, should resort to the rough logic of "blood and iron," when the nobler kind of logic, that which is developed in the struggle of mind with mind, had failed to accomplish the purposes which their hearts and wills, independent of their understandings, were bent on accomplishing.

It may be considered certain that so wise a statesman as Webster — a statesman whose foresight was so palpably the consequence of his insight, and whose piercing intellect was so admirably adapted to read events in their principles — never indulged in such illusions as those which cheered so many of his own adherents, when they supposed his triumph in argumentation was to settle a matter which was really based on organic differences in the institutions of the two sections of the Union. He knew perfectly well that while the Webster men were glorying in his

victory over Calhoun, the Calhoun men were equally jubilant in celebrating Calhoun's victory over him. Which of them had the better in the argument was of little importance in comparison with the terrible fact that the people of the Southern States were widening, year by year, the distance which separated them from the people of the Northern States. We have no means of judging whether Webster clearly foresaw the frightful Civil War between the two sections, which followed so soon after his own death. We only know that to him it was a conflict constantly impending, and which could be averted for the time only by compromises, concessions, and other temporary expedients. If he allowed his mind to pass from the pressing questions of the hour, and to consider the radical division between the two sections of the country which were only formally united, it would seem that he must have felt, as long as the institution of negro slavery existed, that he was only laboring to postpone a conflict which it was impossible for him to prevent.

But my present purpose is simply to indicate the felicity of Webster's intrepid assault on the principles which the Southern disunionists put forward in justification of their acts. Mr. Calhoun's favorite idea was this, — that Nullification was a conservative principle, to be exercised within the Union, and in accordance with a just interpretation of the Constitution. "To begin with nullification," Webster retorted, "with the avowed intent, nevertheless, not to proceed to secession, dismemberment, and general revolution,

is as if one were to take the plunge of Niagara, and cry out that he would stop half-way down. In the one case as in the other, the rash adventurer must go to the bottom of the dark abyss below, were it not that the abyss has no discovered bottom."

How admirable also is his exposure of the distinction attempted to be drawn between secession, as a State right to be exercised under the provisions of what was called "the Constitutional Compact," and revolution. "Secession," he says, "as a revolutionary right, is intelligible; as a right to be proclaimed in the midst of civil commotions, and asserted at the head of armies, I can understand it. But as a practical right, existing under the Constitution, and in conformity with its provisions, it seems to me nothing but a plain absurdity; for it supposes resistance to government, under the authority of government itself; it supposes dismemberment, without violating the principles of union; it supposes opposition to law, without crime; it supposes the total overthrow of government, without revolution."

After putting some pertinent interrogatories — which are arguments in themselves — relating to the inevitable results of secession, he adds that "every man must see that these are all questions which can arise only after a revolution. They presuppose the breaking up of the government. While the Constitution lasts, they are repressed;" — and then, with that felicitous use of the imagination as a handmaid of the understanding, which is the peculiar charac-

teristic of his eloquence, he closes the sentence by saying that "they spring up to annoy and startle us only from its grave." A mere reasoner would have stopped at the word "repressed;" the instantaneous conversion of "questions" into spectres, affrighting and annoying us as they spring up from the grave of the Constitution, — which is also by implication impersonated, — is the work of Webster's ready imagination; and it thoroughly vitalizes the statements which precede it.

A great test of the sincerity of a statesman's style is his moderation. Now, if we take the whole body of Mr. Webster's speeches, whether delivered in the Senate or before popular assemblies, during the period of his opposition to President Jackson's administration, we may well be surprised at their moderation of tone and statement. Everybody old enough to recollect the singular virulence of political speech at that period must remember it as disgraceful equally to the national conscience and the national understanding. The spirit of party, always sufficiently fierce and unreasonable, was then stimulated into a fury resembling madness. Almost every speaker, Democrat or Whig, was in that state of passion which is represented by the physical sign of "foaming at the mouth." Few mouths then opened that did not immediately begin to "foam." So many fortunes were suddenly wrecked by President Jackson's financial policy, and the business of the country was so disastrously disturbed, that, whether the policy was right

or wrong, those who assailed and those who defended it seemed to be equally devoid of common intellectual honesty. "I do well to be angry" appears to have been the maxim which inspired Democratic and Whig orators alike; and what reason there was on either side was submerged in the lies and libels, in the calumnies and caricatures, in the defamations and execrations, which accompanied the citation of facts and the affirmation of principles. Webster, during all this time, was selected as a shining mark at which every puny writer or speaker who opposed him hurled his small or large contribution of verbal rotten eggs; and yet Webster was almost the only Whig statesman who preserved sanity of understanding during the whole progress of that political riot, in which the passions of men became the masters of their understandings. Pious Whig fathers, who worshipped the "godlike Daniel," went almost to the extent of teaching their children to curse Jackson in their prayers; equally pious Democratic fathers brought up their sons and daughters to anathematize the fiend-like Daniel as the enemy of human rights; and yet in reading Webster's speeches, covering the whole space between 1832 and 1836, we can hardly find a statement which an historian of our day would not admit as a candid generalization of facts, or an argument which would not stand the test of logical examination. Such an historian might entirely disagree with the opinions of Webster; but he would certainly award to him the praise of being an honest reasoner

and an honest rhetorician, in a time when reason was used merely as a tool of party passion, and when rhetoric rushed madly into the worst excesses of rhodomontade.

It is also to be said that Webster rarely indulged in personalities. When we consider how great were his powers of sarcasm and invective, how constant were the provocations to exercise them furnished by his political enemies, and how atrociously and meanly allusions to his private affairs were brought into discussions which should have been confined to refuting his reasoning, his moderation in this matter is to be ranked as a great virtue. He could not take a glass of wine without the trivial fact being announced all over the country as indisputable proof that he was an habitual drunkard, though the most remarkable characteristic of his speeches is their temperance, — their "total abstinence" from all the intoxicating moral and mental "drinks" which confuse the understanding and mislead the conscience. He could not borrow money on his note of hand, like any other citizen, without the circumstance being trumpeted abroad as incontrovertible evidence that Nick Biddle had paid him that sum to defend his diabolical Bank in the Senate of the United States. The plain fact that his speeches were confined strictly to the exposition and defence of sound opinions on trade and finance, and that it was difficult to answer them, only confirmed his opponents in the conviction that old Nick was at the bottom of it all. His great intellect

was admitted; but on the high, broad brow, which was its manifestation to the eye, his enemies pasted the words, "To be let," or "For sale." The more impersonal he became in his statements and arguments, the more truculently was he assailed by the personalities of the political gossip and scandal-monger. Indeed, from the time he first came to the front as a great lawyer, statesman, and patriot, he was fixed upon by the whole crew of party libellers as a man whose arguments could be answered most efficiently by staining his character. He passed through life with his head enveloped "in a cloud of poisonous flies;" and the head was the grandest-looking head that had ever been seen on the American continent. It was so pre-eminently noble and impressive, and promised so much more than it could possibly perform, that only one felicitous sarcasm of party malice, among many thousands of bad jokes, has escaped oblivion; and that was stolen from Charles Fox's remark on Lord Chancellor Thurlow, as Fox once viewed him sitting on the wool-sack, frowning on the English House of Lords, which he dominated by the terror of his countenance, and by the fear that he might at any moment burst forth in one of his short, bullying, thundering retorts, should any comparatively weak baron, earl, marquis, or duke dare to oppose him. "Thurlow," said Fox, "must be an impostor, for nobody can be as wise as he looks." The American version of this was, "Webster must be a charlatan, for no one can be as great as he looks."

But during all the time that his antagonists attempted to elude the force of his arguments by hunting up the evidences of his debts, and by trying to show that the most considerate, the most accurate, and the most temperate of his lucid statements were the products of physical stimulants, Webster steadily kept in haughty reserve his power of retaliation. In his speech in reply to Hayne he hinted that if he were imperatively called upon to meet blows with blows, he might be found fully equal to his antagonists in that ignoble province of intellectual pugilism; but that he preferred the more civilized struggle of brain with brain, in a contest which was to decide questions of principle. In the Senate, where he could meet his political opponents face to face, few dared to venture to degrade the subject in debate from the discussion of principles to the miserable subterfuge of imputing bad motives as a sufficient answer to good arguments; but still many of these dignified gentlemen smiled approval on the efforts of the low-minded, small-minded caucus-speakers of their party, when they declared that Webster's logic was unworthy of consideration, because he was bought by the Bank, or bought by the manufacturers of Massachusetts, or bought by some other combination of persons who were supposed to be the deadly enemies of the laboring-men of the country. On some rare occasions Webster's wrath broke out in such smiting words that his adversaries were cowed into silence, and cursed the infatuation which had led them to

overlook the fact that the "logic-machine" had in it invectives more terrible than its reasonings. But generally he refrained from using the giant's power "like a giant;" and it is almost pathetic to remember that when Mr. Everett undertook to edit, in 1851, the standard edition of his Works, Webster gave directions to expunge all personalities from his speeches, even when those personalities were the just punishment of unprovoked attacks on his integrity as a man. Readers will look in vain, in this edition of his Works, for some of the most pungent passages which originally attracted their attention in the first report of the Defence of the Treaty of Washington. At the time these directions were given, Webster was himself the object of innumerable personalities, which were the natural, the inevitable results of his speech of the 7th of March, 1850.

It seems to be a law that the fame of all public men shall be "half disfame." We are specially warned to beware of the man of whom all men speak well. Burke, complimenting his friend Fox for risking everything, even his "darling popularity," on the success of the East India Bill, nobly says: "He is traduced and abused for his supposed motives. He will remember that obloquy is a necessary ingredient in all true glory; he will remember that it was not only in the Roman customs, but it is in the nature of human things, that calumny and abuse are essential parts of triumph."

It may be said, however, that Webster's virtue in

this general abstinence from personalities is to be offset by the fact that he could throw into a glance of his eye, a contortion of his face, a tone of his voice, or a simple gesture of his hand, more scorn, contempt, and hatred than ordinary debaters could express by the profuse use of all the scurrilous terms in the English language. Probably many a sentence, which we now read with an even pulse, was, as originally delivered, accompanied by such pointing of the finger, or such flashing of the eye, or such raising of the voice, that the seemingly innocent words were poisoned arrows that festered in the souls of those against whom they were directed, and made deadly enemies of a number of persons whom he seems, in his printed speeches, never to have mentioned without the respect due from one senator to another. In his speech in Defence of the Treaty of Washington, he had to repel Mr. Ingersoll's indecent attack on his integrity; and his dreadful retort is described by those who heard it as coming within the rules which condemn cruelty to animals. But the "noble rage" which prompted him to indulge in such unwonted invective subsided with the occasion that called it forth, and he was careful to have it expunged when the speech was reprinted. An eminent judge of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, in commending the general dignity and courtesy which characterized Webster's conduct of a case in a court of law, noted one exception. "When," he said, "the opposite counsel had got him into a corner, the way he 'trampled

out' was something frightful to behold. The Court itself could hardly restrain him in his gigantic efforts to extricate himself from the consequences of a blunder or an oversight."

Great writers and orators are commonly economists in the use of words. They compel common words to bear a burden of thought and emotion which mere rhetoricians, with all the resources of the language at their disposal, would never dream of imposing upon them. But it is also to be observed that some writers have the power of giving a new and special significance to a common word, by impressing on it a wealth of meaning which it cannot claim for itself. Three obvious examples of this peculiar power may be cited. Among poets, Chaucer infused into the simple word "green" a poetic ecstasy which no succeeding English poet, not even Wordsworth, has ever rivalled, in describing an English landscape in the month of May. Jonathan Edwards fixed upon the term "sweetness" as best conveying his loftiest conception of the bliss which the soul of the saint can attain to on earth, or expect to be blessed with in heaven; but not one of his theological successors has ever caught the secret of using "sweetness" in the sense attached to it by him. Dr. Barrow gave to the word "rest," as embodying his idea of the spiritual repose of the soul fit for heaven, a significance which it bears in the works of no other great English divine. To descend a little, Webster was fond of certain words, commonplace enough in themselves, to which he

insisted on imparting a more than ordinary import. Two of these, which meet us continually in reading his speeches, are "interesting" and "respectable." The first of these appears to him competent to express that rapture of attention called forth by a thing, an event, or a person, which other writers convey by such a term as "absorbing," or its numerous equivalents. If we should select one passage from his Works which more than any other indicates his power of seeing and feeling, through a process of purely imaginative vision and sympathy, it is that portion of his Plymouth oration where he places himself and his audience as spectators on the barren shore, when the "Mayflower" came into view. He speaks of "the *interesting* group upon the deck" of the little vessel. The very word suggests that we are to have a very commonplace account of the landing and the circumstances which followed it. In an instant, however, we are made to "feel the cold which benumbed, and listen to the winds which pierced" this "interesting" group; and immediately after, the picture is flashed upon the imagination of "chilled and shivering childhood, houseless but for a mother's arms, couchless but for a mother's breast," — an image which shows that the orator had not only transformed himself into a spectator of the scene, but had felt his own blood "almost freeze" in intense sympathy with the physical sufferings of the shelterless mothers and children.

There is no word which the novelists, satirists, philanthropic reformers, and Bohemians of our day

have done so much to discredit, and make *dis*-respectable to the heart and the imagination, as the word "respectable." Webster always uses it as a term of eulogy. A respectable man is, to his mind, a person who performs all his duties to his family, his country, and his God; a person who is not only virtuous, but who has a clear perception of the relation which connects one virtue with another by "the golden thread" of moderation, and who, whether he be a man of genius, or a business man of average talent, or an intelligent mechanic, or a farmer of sound moral and mental character, is to be considered "respectable" because he is one of those citizens whose intelligence and integrity constitute the foundation on which the Republic rests. As late as 1843, in his noble oration on the completion of the Bunker Hill Monument, he declared that if our American institutions had done nothing more than to produce the character of Washington, that alone would entitle them to the respect of mankind. "Washington is all our own! . . . I would cheerfully put the question to-day to the intelligence of Europe and the world, what character of the century, upon the whole, stands out in the relief of history most pure, most *respectable*, most sublime; and I doubt not, that, by a suffrage approaching to unanimity, the answer would be Washington!" It is needless to quote other instances of the peculiar meaning he put into the word "respectable," when we thus find him challenging the Europe of the eighteenth century to name a match for Washington,

and placing "most respectable" after "most pure," and immediately preceding "most sublime," in his enumeration of the three qualities in which Washington surpassed all men of his century.

It has been often remarked that Webster adapted his style, even his habits of mind and modes of reasoning, to the particular auditors he desired to influence; but that whether he addressed an unorganized crowd of people, or a jury, or a bench of judges, or the Senate of the United States, he ever proved himself an orator of the first class. His admirers commonly confine themselves to the admirable sagacity with which he discriminated between the kind of reasoning proper to be employed when he addressed courts and juries, and the kind of reasoning which is most effective in a legislative assembly. The lawyer and the statesman were in Webster kept distinct, except so far as he was a lawyer who had argued before the Supreme Court questions of constitutional law. An amusing instance of this abnegation of the lawyer, while incidentally bringing in a lawyer's knowledge of judicial decisions, occurs in a little episode in his debate with Mr. Calhoun, in 1849, as to the relation of Congress to the Territories. Mr. Calhoun said that he had been told that the Supreme Court of the United States had decided, in *one* case, that the Constitution did not extend to the Territories, but that he was "incredulous of the fact." "Oh!" replied Mr. Webster, "I can remove the gentleman's incredulity very easily, for I can assure him

that the same thing has been decided by the United States courts over and over again for the last thirty years." It will be observed, however, that Mr. Webster, after communicating this important item of information, proceeded to discuss the question as if the Supreme Court had no existence, and bases his argument on the plain terms of the Constitution and the plain facts recorded in the history of the government established by it.

Macaulay, in his lively way, has shown the difficulty of manufacturing English statesmen out of English lawyers, though as lawyers their rank in the profession may be very high. "Their arguments," he says, "are intellectual prodigies, abounding with the happiest analogies and the most refined distinctions. The principles of their arbitrary science being once admitted, the statute-books and the reports being once assumed as the foundations of reasoning, these men must be allowed to be perfect masters of logic; but if a question arises as to the postulates on which their whole system rests, if they are called upon to vindicate the fundamental maxims of that system which they have passed their lives in studying, these very men often talk the language of savages or of children. Those who have listened to a man of this class in his own court, and who have witnessed the skill with which he analyzes and digests a vast mass of evidence, or reconciles a crowd of precedents which at first sight seem contradictory, scarcely know him again when, a few hours later, they hear him speaking on the other

side of Westminster Hall in his capacity of legislator. They can scarcely believe that the paltry quirks which are faintly heard through a storm of coughing, and which do not impose on the plainest country gentleman, can proceed from the same sharp and vigorous intellect which had excited their admiration under the same roof and on the same day." And to this keen distinction between an English lawyer and an English lawyer as a member of the House of Commons, may be added the peculiar kind of sturdy manliness which is demanded in any person who aims to take a leading part in Parliamentary debates. Erskine — probably the greatest advocate who ever appeared in the English courts of law — made but a comparatively poor figure in the House of Commons, as a member of the Whig opposition. "The truth is, Erskine," Sheridan once said to him, "you are afraid of Pitt, and that is the flabby part of your character."

But Macaulay, in another article, makes a point against the leaders of party themselves. His definition of Parliamentary government is "government by speaking;" and he declares that the most effective speakers are commonly ill-informed, shallow in thought, devoid of large ideas of legislation, hazarding the loosest speculations with the utmost intellectual impudence, and depending for success on volubility of speech rather than on accuracy of knowledge or penetration of intelligence. "The tendency of institutions like those of England," he adds, "is to encourage readiness in public men, at the expense both

of fulness and of exactness. The keenest and most vigorous minds of every generation, minds often admirably fitted for the investigation of truth, are habitually employed in producing arguments such as no man of sense would ever put into a treatise intended for publication, — arguments which are just good enough to be used once, when aided by fluent delivery and pointed language." And he despairingly closes with the remark that he "would sooner expect a great original work on political science — such a work, for example, as the 'Wealth of Nations' — from an apothecary in a country town, or from a minister in the Hebrides, than from a statesman who, ever since he was one-and-twenty, had been a distinguished debater in the House of Commons."

Now, it is plain that neither of these contemptuous judgments applies to Webster. He was a great lawyer; but as a legislator the precedents of the lawyer did not control the action or supersede the principles of the statesman. He was one of the most formidable debaters that ever appeared in a legislative assembly; and yet those who most resolutely grappled with him in the duel of debate would be the last to impute to him inaccuracy of knowledge or shallowness of thought. He carried into the Senate of the United States a trained mind, disciplined by the sternest culture of his faculties, disdaining any plaudits which were not the honest reward of robust reasoning on generalized facts, and "gravitating" in the direction of truth, whether he hit or missed it. In his case, at

least, there was nothing in his legal experience, or in his legislative experience, which would have unfitted him for producing a work on the science of politics. The best speeches in the House of Commons of Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell appear very weak indeed, as compared with the "Reply to Hayne," or the speech on "The Constitution not a Compact between Sovereign States," or the speech on the President's Protest.

In this connection it may be said, when we remember the hot contests between the two men, that there is something plaintive in Calhoun's dying testimony to Webster's austere intellectual conscientiousness. Mr. Venables, who attended the South Carolina statesman in his dying hours, wrote to Webster: "When your name was mentioned, he remarked that 'Mr. Webster has as high a standard of truth as any statesman I have met in debate. Convince him, and he cannot reply; he is silenced; he cannot look truth in the face and oppose it by argument. I think that it can be readily perceived by his manner when he felt the unanswerable force of a reply.' He often spoke of you in my presence, and always kindly and most respectfully." Now, it must be considered that, in debate, the minds of Webster and Calhoun had come into actual contact and collision. Each really felt the force of the other. An ordinary duel might be ranked among idle pastimes when compared with the stress and strain and pain of their encounters in the duel of debate. A sword-cut or pistol-bullet, maiming the

body, was as nothing in comparison with the wounds they mutually inflicted on that substance which was immortal in both. It was a duel, or series of duels, in which mind was opposed to mind, and will to will, and where the object appeared to be to inflict moral and mental annihilation on one of the combatants. There never passed a word between them on which the most ingenious Southern jurists, in their interpretations of the "code" of honor, could have found matter for a personal quarrel; and yet these two proud and strong personalities knew that they were engaged in a mortal contest, in which neither gave quarter nor expected quarter. Mr. Calhoun's intellectual egotism was as great as his intellectual ability. He always supposed that he was the victor in every close logical wrestle with any mind to which his own was opposed. He never wrestled with a mind, until he met Webster's, which in tenacity, grasp, and power was a match for his own. He, of course, thought his antagonist was beaten by his superior strength and amplitude of argumentation; but it is still to be noted that he, the most redoubtable opponent that Webster ever encountered, testified, though in equivocal terms, to Webster's intellectual honesty. When he crept, half dead, into the Senate-Chamber to hear Webster's speech of the 7th of March, 1850, he objected emphatically at the end to Webster's declaration that the Union could not be dissolved. After declaring that Calhoun's supposed case of justifiable resistance came within the defini-

tion of the ultimate right of revolution, which is lodged in all oppressed communities, Webster added that he did not at that time wish to go into a discussion of the nature of the United States government. "The honorable gentleman and myself," he said, "have broken lances sufficiently often before on that subject." "I have no desire to do it now," replied Calhoun; and Webster blandly retorted, "I presume the gentleman has not, and I have quite as little." One is reminded here of Dr. Johnson's remark, when he was stretched on a sick-bed, with his gladiatorial powers of argument suspended by physical exhaustion. "If that fellow Burke were now present," the Doctor humorously murmured, "he would certainly kill me."

But to what has been said of Webster's eminence as a lawyer and a statesman it is proper to add that he has never been excelled as a writer of State papers among the public men of the United States. Mr. Emerson has a phrase which is exactly applicable to these efforts of Webster's mind. That phrase is "superb propriety." Throughout his despatches he always seems to feel that he impersonates his country; and the gravity and weight of his style are as admirable as its simplicity and majestic ease. "Daniel Webster, his mark," is indelibly stamped on them all. When the Treaty of Washington was criticised by the Whigs in the English Parliament, Macaulay specially noticed the difference in the style of the two negotiators. Lord Ashburton, he said, had compromised the honor of his country by "the humble, caressing, wheedling

tone" of his letters,—a tone which contrasted strangely with "the firm, resolute, vigilant, and unyielding manner" of the American Secretary of State. It is to be noticed that no other opponent of Sir Robert Peel's administration — not even Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell — struck at the essential weakness of Lord Ashburton's despatches with the force and sagacity which characterized Macaulay's assault on the treaty. Indeed, a rhetorician and critic less skilful than Macaulay can easily detect that "America" is represented fully in Webster's despatches, while "Britannia" has a very amiable, but not very forcible, representative in Lord Ashburton. Had Palmerston been the British plenipotentiary, we can easily imagine how different would have been the task imposed on Webster. As the American Secretary was generally in the right in every position he assumed, he would probably have triumphed even over Palmerston; but the letters of the "pluckiest" of English statesmen would, we may be sure, have never been criticised in the House of Commons as "humble, wheedling, and caressing."

In addition, however, to his legal arguments, his senatorial speeches, and his State papers, Webster is to be considered as the greatest orator our country has produced, in his addresses before miscellaneous assemblages of the people. In saying this we do not confine the remark to such noble orations as those on the "First Settlement of New England," "The Bunker Hill Monument," and "Adams and Jefferson," but extend it so as to include speeches before

great masses of people who could be hardly distinguished from a mob, and who were under no restraint but that imposed by their own self-respect and their respect for the orator. On these occasions he was uniformly successful. It is impossible to detect, in any reports of these popular addresses, that he ever stooped to employ a style of speech or mode of argument commonly supposed appropriate to a speaker on the "stump;" and yet he was the greatest "stump" orator that our country has ever seen. He seemed to delight in addressing five or ten or even twenty thousand people, in the open air, trusting that the penetrating tones of his voice would reach even the ears of those who were on the ragged edges of the swaying crowd before him; and he would thus speak to the sovereign people, in their unorganized state as a collection of uneasy and somewhat belligerent individuals, with a dignity and majesty similar to the dignity and majesty which characterized his arguments before the Senate of the United States, or before a bench of judges. A large portion of his published Works consists of such speeches, and they rank only second among the remarkable productions of his mind.

The question arises, How could he hold the attention of such audiences without condescending to flatter their prejudices, or without occasionally acting the part of the sophist and the buffoon? Much may be said, in accounting for this phenomenon, about his widely extended reputation, his imposing presence, the vulgar curiosity to see a man whom even the

smallest country newspaper thought of sufficient importance to defame, his power of giving vitality to simple words which the most ignorant of his auditors could easily understand, and the instinctive respect which the rudest kind of men feel for a grand specimen of robust manhood. But the real, the substantial source of his power over such audiences proceeded from his respect for *them;* and their respect for him was more or less consciously founded on the perception of this fact.

Indeed, a close scrutiny of his speeches will show how conscientiously he regards the rights of other minds, however inferior they may be to his own; and this virtue — for it is a virtue — is never more apparent than in his arguments and appeals addressed to popular assemblies. No working-man, whether farmer, mechanic, factory "hand," or day-laborer, ever deemed himself insulted by a word from the lips of Daniel Webster; he felt himself rather exalted in his own esteem, for the time, by coming in contact with that beneficent and comprehensive intelligence, which cherished among its favorite ideas a scheme for lifting up the American laborer to a height of comfort and respectability which the European laborer could hardly hope to attain. Prominent politicians, men of wealth and influence, statesmen of high social and political rank, may at times have considered Webster as arrogant and bad-tempered, and may at times have felt disposed to fasten a quarrel upon him; even in Massachusetts this disposition broke

out in conventions of the party to which he belonged; but it would be in vain to find a single laboring-man, whether he met Webster in private, or half pushed and half fought his way into a mass meeting in order to get his ears into communication with the orator's voice, who ever heard a word from him which did not exalt the dignity of labor, or which was not full of sympathy for the laborer's occasional sorrows and privations. Webster seemed to have ever present to his mind the poverty of the humble home of his youth. His father, his brothers, he himself, had all been brought up to consider manual toil a dignified occupation, and as consistent with the exercise of all the virtues which flourish under the domestic roof. More than this, it may be said that, with the exception of a few intimate friends, his sympathies to the last were most warmly with common laborers. Indeed, if we closely study the private correspondence of this statesman, who was necessarily brought into relations more or less friendly with the conventionally great men of the world, European as well as American, we shall find that, after all, he took more real interest in Seth Peterson and John Taylor and Porter Wright, men connected with him in fishing and farming, than he did in the ambassadors of foreign States whom he met as Senator or as Secretary of State, or in all the members of the polite society of Washington, New York, and Boston. He was very near to Nature himself; and the nearer a man was to Nature, the more he esteemed him.

Thus persons who superintended his farms and cattle, or who pulled an oar in his boat when he ventured out in search of cod and halibut, thought "Squire Webster" a man who realized their ideal and perfection of good-fellowship; while it may confidently be said that many of his closest friends among men of culture, including lawyers, men of letters, and statesmen of the first rank, must have occasionally resented the "anfractuosities" of his mood and temper. But Seth Peterson and Porter Wright and John Taylor never complained of these "anfractuosities." Webster, in fact, is one of the few public men of the country in whose championship of the rights and sympathy with the wrongs of labor there is not the slightest trace of the arts of the demagogue; and in this fact we may find the reason why even the "roughs," who are present in every mass meeting, always treated him with respect. Perhaps it would not be out of place to remark here, that in his speech of the 7th of March he missed a grand opportunity to vindicate Northern labor, in the reference he made to a foolish tirade of a senator from Louisiana, who "took pains to run a contrast between the slaves of the South and the laboring people of the North, giving the preference, in all points of condition, of comfort, and happiness, to the slaves of the South." Webster made a complete reply to this aspersion on Northern labor; but as his purpose was to conciliate, he did not blast the libeller by quoting the most eminent example that could be named demonstrating the

falsehood of the slave-holding senator's assertion. Without deviating from the conciliatory attitude he had assumed, one could easily imagine him as lifting his large frame to its full height, flashing from his rebuking eyes a glance of scorn at the "amiable Senator," and simply saying, "*I* belong to the class which the Senator from Louisiana stigmatizes as more degraded than the slaves of the South." There was not at the time any senator from the South, except Mr. Calhoun, that the most prejudiced Southern man would have thought of comparing with Webster in respect to intellectual eminence; and if Webster had then and there placed himself squarely on his position as the son of a Northern laborer, we should have been spared all the rhetoric about Northern "mud-sills," with which the Senate was afterwards afflicted. Webster was our man of men; and it would seem that he should have crushed such talk at the outset, by proudly assuming that Northern labor was embodied and impersonated in him, — that *he* had sprung from its ranks, and was proud of his ancestry.

An ingenious and powerful, but paradoxical thinker once told me that I was mistaken in calling Jonathan Edwards and Daniel Webster great reasoners. "They were bad reasoners," he added, "but great poets." Without questioning the right of the author of "An Enquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notion of that Freedom of the Will, which is supposed to be Essential to Moral Agency," to be ranked among the most eminent of modern logicians, I could still understand

why he was classed among poets; for whether Edwards paints the torments of hell or the bliss of heaven, his imagination almost rivals that of Dante in intensity of realization. But it was at first puzzling to comprehend why Webster should be depressed as a reasoner in order to be exalted as a poet. The images and metaphors scattered over his speeches are so evidently brought in to illustrate and enforce his statements and arguments, that, grand as they often are, the imagination displayed in them is still a faculty strictly subsidiary to the reasoning power. It was only after reflecting patiently for some time on the seeming paradox that I caught a glimpse of my friend's meaning; and it led me at once to consider an entirely novel question, not heretofore mooted by any of Webster's critics, whether friendly or unfriendly, in their endeavors to explain the reason of his influence over the best minds of the generation to which he belonged. In declaring that, as a poet, he far exceeded any capacity he evinced as a reasoner, my paradoxical friend must have meant that Webster had the poet's power of so *organizing* a speech that it stood out to the eye of the mind as a palpable intellectual product and fact, possessing not merely that vague reality which comes from erecting a plausible mental structure of deductive argumentation, based on strictly limited premises, but a positive reality akin to the products of Nature herself, when she tries her hand in constructing a ledge of rocks or rearing a chain of hills.

In illustration, it may be well to cite the example of poets with whom Webster, of course, cannot be compared. Among the great mental facts, palpable to the eyes of all men interested in literature, are such creations as the Iliad, the "Divine Comedy," the great Shakspearian dramas, the "Paradise Lost," and "Faust." The commentaries and criticisms on these are numerous enough to occupy the shelves of a large library; some of them attempt to show that Homer, Dante, Shakspeare, Milton, and Goethe were all wrong in their methods of creation; but they still cannot obscure, to ordinary vision, the lustre of these luminaries as they placidly shine in the intellectual firmament, which is literally *over* our heads. They are as palpable to the eye of the mind as Sirius, Arcturus, the Southern Cross, and the planets Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn are to the bodily sense. M. Taine has recently assailed the "Paradise Lost" with the happiest of French epigrams; he tries to prove that, in construction, it is the most ridiculously inartistic monstrosity that the imagination of a great mind ever framed out of chaos; but after we have thoroughly enjoyed the play of his wit, there the "Paradise Lost" remains, an undisturbed object in the intellectual heavens, disdaining to justify its right to exist on any other grounds than the mere fact of its existence; and, certainly, not more ridiculous than Saturn himself, as we look at him through a great equatorial telescope, swinging through space encumbered with his clumsy ring, and his wrangling family of satel-

lites, but still, in spite of peculiarities on which M. Taine might exercise his wit until doomsday, one of the most beautiful and sublime objects which the astronomer can behold in the whole phenomena of the heavens.

Indeed, in reading criticisms on such durable poetic creations and organizations as we have named, one is reminded of Sydney Smith's delicious chaffing of his friend Jeffrey, on account of Jeffrey's sensitiveness of literary taste, and his inward rage that events, men, and books, outside of him, do not correspond to the exacting rules which are the products of his own subjective and somewhat peevish intelligence. "I like," says Sydney, "to tell you these things, because you never do so well as when you are humbled and frightened; and if *you could be alarmed into the semblance of modesty*, you would charm everybody. But remember my joke against you about the moon: 'D—n the solar system! bad light — planets too distant — pestered with comets — feeble contrivance; could make a better with great ease.'"

Now, when a man, in whatever department or direction of thought his activity is engaged, succeeds in organizing, or even welding together, the materials on which he works, so that the product, as a whole, is *visible* to the mental eye as a new creation or construction, he has an immense advantage over all critics of his performance. Refined reasonings are impotent to overthrow it; epigrams glance off from it as rifle-bullets rebound when aimed at a granite

wall; and it stands erect long after the reasonings and the epigrams are forgotten. Even when its symmetry is destroyed by a long and destructive siege, a pile of stones still remains, as at Fort Sumter, to attest what power of resistance it opposed to all the resources of modern artillery.

If we look at Webster's greatest speeches, as, for instance, "The Reply to Hayne," "The Constitution not a Compact between Sovereign States," "The President's Protest," and others that might be mentioned, we shall find that they partake of the character of organic formations, or at least of skilful engineering or architectural constructions. Even Mr. Calhoun never approached him in this art of giving objective reality to a speech, which, after all, is found, on analysis, to consist only of a happy collocation and combination of words; but in Webster the words are either all alive with the creative spirit of the poet, or, at the worst, resemble the blocks of granite or marble which the artisan piles, one on the other, and the result of which, though it may represent a poor style of architecture, is still a rude specimen of a Gothic edifice. The artist and artificer are both observable in Webster's work; but the reality and solidity of the construction cannot be questioned. At the present time an educated reader would be specially interested in the mental processes by which Webster thus succeeded in giving objective existence and validity to the operations of his mind; and, whether sympathizing with his opinions or not, would

as little think of refusing to read them because of their Whiggism, as he would think of refusing to read Homer because of his heathenism, or Dante because of his Catholicism, or Milton because of his compound of Arianism and Calvinism, or Goethe because of his Pantheism. The fact which would most interest such a reader would be, that Webster had in some mysterious way translated and transformed his abstract propositions into concrete substance and form. The form might offend his reason, his taste, or his conscience; but he could not avoid admitting that it *had* a form, while most speeches, even those made by able men, are comparatively formless, however lucid they may be in the array of facts, and plausible in the order and connection of arguments.

In trying to explain this power, the most obvious comparison which would arise in the mind of an intelligent reader would be, that Webster, as a rhetorician, resembled Vauban and Cohorn as military engineers. In the war of debate, he so *fortified* the propositions he maintained, that they could not be carried by direct assault, but must be patiently besieged. The words he employed were simple enough, and fell short of including the vocabulary of even fifth-rate declaimers; but he had the art of so disposing them, that to an honest reasoner the position he took appeared to be impregnable. To assail it by the ordinary method of passionate protest and illogical reasoning, was as futile as a dash of light

cavalry would have been against the defences of such cities as Namur and Lille. Indeed, in his speech, "The Constitution not a Compact between Sovereign States," he erected a whole Torres Vedras line of fortifications, on which legislative Massenas dashed themselves in vain, and, however strong in numbers in respect to the power of voting him down, recoiled defeated in every attempt to reason him down.

In further illustration of this peculiar power of Webster, the speech of the 7th of March, 1850, may be cited; for its delivery is to be ranked with the most important historical events. For some years it was the object of the extremes of panegyric and the extremes of execration. But this effort is really the most loosely constructed of all the great productions of Webster's mind. In force, compactness, and completeness, in closeness of thought to things, in closeness of imagery to the reasoning it illustrates, and in general intellectual fibre, muscle, and bone, it cannot be compared to such an oration as that on the "First Settlement of New England," or such a speech as that which had for its theme "The Constitution not a Compact between Sovereign States;" but, after all deductions have been made, it was still a speech which frowned upon its opponents as a kind of verbal fortress constructed both for the purpose of defence and aggression. Its fame is due, in a great degree, to its resistance to a storm of assaults, such as had rarely before been concentrated on any speech delivered in either branch of the Congress of

the United States. Indeed, a very large portion of the intellect, the moral sentiment, and the moral passion of the free States was directed against it. There was not a weapon in the armory of the dialectician or the rhetorician which was not employed with the intent of demolishing it. Contempt of Webster was vehemently taught as the beginning of political wisdom. That a speech thus assailed should survive the attacks made upon it, appeared to be impossible. And yet it did survive, and is alive now, while better speeches — or what the present writer thought at the time to be more convincing speeches — have not retained individual existence, however deeply they may have influenced that public opinion which, in the end, determines political events. "I still live," was Webster's declaration on his death-bed, when the friends gathered around it imagined he had breathed his last; and the same words might be uttered by the speech of the 7th of March, could it possess the vocal organ which announces personal existence. Between the time when it was originally delivered and the present year there runs a great and broad stream of blood, shed from the veins of Northern and Southern men alike; the whole political and moral constitution of the country has practically suffered an abrupt change; new problems engage the attention of thoughtful statesmen; much is forgotten which was once considered of the first importance, — but the 7th of March Speech, battered as it is by innumerable attacks, is still remembered at

least as one which called forth more power than it embodied in itself. This persistence of life is due to the fact that it was "organized."

Is this power of organization common among orators? It seems to me that, on the contrary, it is very rare. In some of Burke's speeches, in which his sensibility and imagination were thoroughly under the control of his judgment, — as, for instance, in his speech on Conciliation with America, that on Economical Reform, and that to the Electors of Bristol, — we find the orator to be a consummate master of the art of so constructing a speech that it serves the immediate object which prompted its delivery, while at the same time it has in it a principle of vitality which makes it survive the occasion that called it forth. But the greatest of Burke's speeches — if we look merely at the richness and variety of mental power and the force and depth of moral passion displayed in it — is his speech on the Nabob of Arcot's Debts. No speech ever delivered before any assembly, legislative, judicial, or popular, can rank with this in respect to the abundance of its facts, reasonings, and imagery, and the ferocity of its moral wrath. It resembles the El Dorado that Voltaire's Candide visited, where the boys played with precious stones of inestimable value, as our boys play with ordinary marbles; for to the inhabitants of El Dorado diamonds and pearls were as common as pebbles are with us.

But the defect of this speech, which must still be considered, on the whole, the most inspired product of

Burke's great nature, was this, — that it did not strike its hearers or readers as having *reality* for its basis or for the superstructure raised upon it. Englishmen could not believe then, and most of them probably do not believe now, that it had any solid foundation in incontrovertible facts. It did not "fit in" to their ordinary modes of thought; and it has never been ranked with Burke's "organized" orations; it has never come home to what Bacon called the "business and bosoms" of his countrymen. They have generally dismissed it from their imaginations as "a phantasmagoria and a hideous dream" created by Burke under the impulse of the intense hatred he felt for the administration which succeeded the overthrow of the government which was founded on the coalition of Fox and North.

Now, in simple truth, the speech is the most masterly statement of facts relating to the oppression of millions of the people of India, which was ever forced on the attention of the House of Commons, — a legislative assembly which, it may be incidentally remarked, was practically responsible for the just government of the immense Indian empire of Great Britain. It is curious that the main facts on which the argument of Burke rests have been confirmed by James Mill, the coldest-blooded historian that ever narrated the enormous crimes which attended the rise and progress of the British power in Hindostan, and a man who also had a strong intellectual antipathy to the mind of Burke. In making the speech, Burke had documentary evi-

dence of a large portion of the transactions he denounced, and had *divined* the rest. Mill supports him both as regards the facts of which Burke had positive knowledge, and the facts which he deductively inferred from those he knew. Having thus a strong foundation for his argument, he exerted every faculty of his mind and every impulse of his moral sentiment and moral passion to overwhelm the leading members of the administration of Pitt, by attempting to make them accomplices in crimes which would disgrace even slave-traders on the Guinea coast. The merely intellectual force of his reasoning is crushing; his analysis seems to be sharpened by his hatred; and there is no device of contempt, scorn, derision, and direct personal attack which he does not unsparingly use. In the midst of all this mental tumult, inestimable maxims of moral and political wisdom are shot forth in short sentences, which have so much of the sting and brilliancy of epigram that at first we do not appreciate their depth of thought; and through all there burns such a pitiless fierceness of moral reprobation of cruelty, injustice, and wrong that all the accredited courtesies of debate are violated, once, at least, in every five minutes. In any American legislative assembly he would have been called to order at least once in five minutes. The images which the orator brings in to give vividness to his argument are sometimes coarse; but, coarse as they are, they admirably reflect the moral turpitude of the men against whom he inveighs. Among these is the image with

which he covers Dundas, the special friend of Pitt, with a ridicule which promises to be immortal. Dundas, on the occasion when Fox and Burke called for papers by the aid of which they proposed to demonstrate the iniquity of the scheme by which the ministry proposed to settle the debts of the Nabob of Arcot, pretended that the production of such papers would be indelicate, — "that this inquiry is of a delicate nature, and that the State will suffer detriment by the exposure of this transaction." As Dundas had previously brought out six volumes of Reports, generally confirming Burke's own views of the corruption and oppression which marked the administration of affairs in India, he laid himself open to Burke's celebrated assault. Dundas and delicacy, he said, were "a rare and singular coalition." And then follows an image of colossal coarseness, such as might be supposed capable of rousing thunder-peals of laughter from a company of festive giants, — an image which Lord Brougham declared offended *his* sensitive taste, — the sensitive taste of one of the most formidable legal and legislative bullies that ever appeared before the juries or Parliament of Great Britain, and who never hesitated to use any illustration, however vulgar, which he thought would be effective to degrade his opponents.

But whatever may be thought of the indelicacy of Burke's image, it was one eminently adapted to penetrate through the thick hide of the minister of State at whom it was aimed; and it shamed him as far as a profligate politician like Dundas was capable of feel-

ing the sensation of shame. But there are also flashes, or rather flames, of impassioned imagination in the same speech, which rush up from the main body of its statements and arguments, and remind us of nothing so much as of those jets of incandescent gas which, we are told by astronomers, occasionally leap, from the extreme outer covering of the sun, to the height of a hundred or a hundred and sixty thousand miles, and testify to the terrible forces raging within it. After reading this speech for the fiftieth time, the critic cannot free himself from the rapture of admiration and amazement which he experienced in his first fresh acquaintance with it. Yet its delivery in the House of Commons (February 28, 1785) produced an effect so slight that Pitt, after a few minutes' consultation with Grenville, concluded that it was not worth the trouble of being answered; and the House of Commons, obedient to the Prime Minister's direction, negatived, by a large majority, the motion in advocating which Burke poured out the wonderful treasures of his intellect and imagination. To be sure, the House was tired to death with the discussion, was probably very sleepy, and the orator spoke five hours after the members had already shouted, "Question! Question!"

The truth is, that this speech, unmatched though it is in the literature of eloquence, had not, as has been previously stated, the air of reality. It struck the House as a magnificent Oriental dream, as an Arabian Nights' Entertainment, as a tale told by an inspired

madman, "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing;" and the evident partisan intention of the orator to blast Pitt's administration, by exhibiting its complicity in one of the most enormous frauds recorded in history, confirmed the dandies, the cockneys, the bankers, and the country gentlemen, who, as members of the House of Commons, stood by Pitt with all the combined force of their levity, their venality, and their stupidity, in the propriety of voting Burke down. And even now, when the substantial truth of all the facts he alleged is established on evidence which convinces historians, the admiring reader can understand why it failed to convince Burke's contemporaries, and why it still appears to lack the characteristics of a speech thoroughly organized. Indeed, the mind of Burke, when it was delivered, can only be compared to a volcanic mountain in eruption; — not merely a volcano like that of Vesuvius, visited by scientists and amateurs in crowds, when it deigns to pour forth its flames and lava for the entertainment of the multitude; but a lonely volcano, like that of Etna, rising far above Vesuvius in height, far removed from all the vulgar curiosity of a body of tourists, but rending the earth on which it stands with the mighty earthquake throes of its fiery centre and heart. The moral passion — perhaps it would be more just to say the moral fury — displayed in the speech is elemental, and can be compared to nothing less intense than the earth's interior fire and heat.

Now, in Webster's great legislative efforts his mind

is never exhibited in a state of eruption. In the most excited debates in which he bore a prominent part, nothing strikes us more than the admirable self-possession, than the majestic inward calm, which presides over all the operations of his mind and the impulses of his sensibility; so that in building up the fabric of his speech he has his reason, imagination, and passion under full control, — using each faculty and feeling as the occasion may demand, but never allowing himself to be used *by* it, — and always therefore conveying the impression of power in reserve, while he may, in fact, be exercising all the power he has to the utmost. In laboriously erecting his edifice of reasoning he also studiously regards the intellects and the passions of ordinary men, strives to bring his mind into cordial relations with theirs, employs every faculty he possesses to give reality, to give even visibility, to his thoughts; and though he never made a speech which rivals that of Burke on the Nabob of Arcot's Debts, in respect to grasp of understanding, astounding wealth of imagination, and depth of moral passion, he always so contrived to organize his materials into a complete whole, that the result stood out clearly to the sight of the mind as a structure resting on strong foundations, and reared to due height by the mingled skill of the artisan and the artist. When he does little more than weld his materials together, he is still an artificer of the old school of giant workmen, the school that dates its pedigree from Tubal Cain.

After all this wearisome detail and dilution of the idea attempted to be expressed, it may be that I have failed to convey an adequate impression of what constitutes Webster's distinction among orators, so far as orators have left speeches which are considered an invaluable addition to the literature of the language in which they were originally delivered. Everybody understands why any one of the great sermons of Jeremy Taylor, or the sermon of Dr. South on "Man created in the Image of God," or the sermon of Dr. Barrow on "Heavenly Rest," differs from the millions on millions of doubtless edifying sermons that have been preached and printed during the last two centuries and a half; but everybody does not understand the distinction between one brilliant oration and another, when both made a great sensation at the time, while only one survived in literature. Probably Charles James Fox was a more effective speaker in the House of Commons than Edmund Burke; probably Henry Clay was a more effective speaker in Congress than Daniel Webster; but when the occasions on which their speeches were made are found gradually to fade from the memory of men, why is it that the speeches of Fox and Clay have no recognized position in literature, while those of Burke and Webster are ranked with literary productions of the first class? The reason is as really obvious as that which explains the exceptional value of some of the efforts of the great orators of the pulpit. Jeremy Taylor, Dr. South, and Dr. Barrow, different as they were in

temper and disposition, succeeded in "organizing" some masterpieces in their special department of intellectual and moral activity; and the same is true of Burke and Webster in the departments of legislation and political science. The "occasion" was merely an opportunity for the consolidation into a speech of the rare powers and attainments, the large personality and affluent thought, which were the spiritual possessions of the man who made it, — a speech which represented the whole intellectual manhood of the speaker, — a manhood in which knowledge, reason, imagination, and sensibility were all consolidated under the directing power of will.

A pertinent example of the difference we have attempted to indicate may be easily found in contrasting Fox's closing speech on the East India Bill with Burke's on the same subject. For immediate effect on the House of Commons, it ranks with the most masterly of Fox's Parliamentary efforts. The hits on his opponents were all "telling." The *argumentum ad hominem*, embodied in short, sharp statements, or startling interrogatories, was never employed with more brilliant success. The reasoning was rapid, compact, encumbered by no long enumeration of facts, and, though somewhat unscrupulous here and there, was driven home upon his adversaries with a skill that equalled its audacity. It may be said that there is not a sentence in the whole speech which was not calculated to sting a sleepy audience into attention, or to give delight to a fatigued audience

which still managed to keep its eyes and minds wide open. Even in respect to the principles of liberty and justice, which were the animating life of the bill, Fox's terse sentences contrast strangely with the somewhat more lumbering and elaborate paragraphs of Burke. "What," he exclaims, putting his argument in his favorite interrogative form, — "what is the most odious species of tyranny? Precisely that which this bill is meant to annihilate, — that a handful of men, free themselves, should exercise the most base and abominable despotism over millions of their fellow-creatures; that innocence should be the victim of oppression; that industry should toil for rapine; that the harmless laborer should sweat, not for his own benefit, but for the luxury and rapacity of tyrannic depredation, — in a word, that thirty millions of men, gifted by Providence with the ordinary endowments of humanity, should groan under a system of despotism unmatched in all the histories of the world! What is the end of all government? Certainly, the happiness of the governed. Others may hold different opinions; but this is mine, and I proclaim it. What, then, are we to think of a government whose good fortune is supposed to spring from the calamities of its subjects, whose aggrandizement grows out of the miseries of mankind? This is the kind of government exercised under the East Indian Company upon the natives of Hindostan; and the subversion of that infamous government is the main object of the bill in question." And afterwards he

says, with admirable point and pungency of statement: "Every line in both the bills which I have had the honor to introduce presumes the possibility of bad administration; for every word breathes suspicion. This bill supposes that men are but men. It confides in no integrity; it trusts no character; it inculcates the wisdom of a jealousy of power, and annexes responsibility, not only to every *action*, but even to the *inaction* of those who are to dispense it. The necessity of these provisions must be evident, when it is known that the different misfortunes of the company have resulted not more from what their servants *did*, than from what the masters *did not*."

There is a directness in such sentences as these which we do not find in Burke's speech on the East India Bill; but Burke's remains as a part of English literature, and in form and substance, especially in substance, is so immensely superior to that of Fox, that in quoting sentences from the latter one may almost be supposed to rescue them from that neglect which attends all speeches that do not reach beyond the occasion which calls them forth. In Bacon's phrase, the speech of Fox shows "small matter, and infinite agitation of wit;" in Burke's, we discern large matter with an abundance of "wit" proper to the discussion of the matter, but nothing which suggests the idea of mere "agitation." Fox, in his speeches, subordinated everything to the immediate impression he might make on the House of Commons. He deliberately gave it as his opinion, that a speech

that read well must be a bad speech; and, in a literary sense, the House of Commons, which he entered before he was twenty, may be called both the cradle and the grave of his fame. It has been said that he was a debater whose speeches should be studied by every man who wishes "to learn the science of logical defence;" that he alone, among English orators, resembles Demosthenes, inasmuch as his reasoning is "penetrated and made red-hot by passion;" and that nothing could excel the effect of his delivery when "he was in the full paroxysm of inspiration, foaming, screaming, choked by the rushing multitude of his words." But not one of his speeches, not even that on the East India Bill, or on the Westminster Scrutiny, or on the Russian Armament, or on Parliamentary Reform, or on Mr. Pitt's Rejection of Bonaparte's Overtures for Peace, has obtained an abiding place in the literature of Great Britain. It would be no disparagement to an educated man, if it were said that he had never read these speeches; but it would be a serious bar to his claim to be considered an English scholar if he confessed to be ignorant of the great speeches of Burke, for such a confession would be like admitting that he had never read the first book of Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity," Bacon's "Essays and Advancement of Learning," Milton's "Areopagitica," Butler's "Analogy," and Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations."

When we reflect on the enormous number of American speeches which, when they were first delivered,

were confidently predicted, by appreciating friends, to insure to the orators a fame which would be immortal, one wonders a little at the quiet persistence of the speeches of Webster in refusing to die with the abrupt suddenness of other orations which at the time of their delivery seemed to have an equal chance of renown. The lifeless remains of such unfortunate failures are now entombed in that dreariest of all mausoleums, the dingy quarto volumes, hateful to all human eyes, which are lettered on the back with the title of "Congressional Debates," — a collection of printed matter which members of Congress are wont to send to a favored few among their constituents, and which are immediately consigned to the dust-barrel or sold to pedlers in waste paper, according as the rage of the recipients takes a scornful or an economical direction. It would seem that the speeches of Webster are saved from this fate, by the fact that in them the mental and moral life of a great man, and of a great master of the English language, are organized in a palpable intellectual form. The reader feels that they have some of the substantial qualities which he recognizes in looking at the gigantic constructions of the master workmen among the crowd of the world's engineers and architects, in looking at the organic products of Nature herself, and in surveying, through the eye of his imagination, those novel reproductions of Nature which great poets have embodied in works which are indelibly stamped with the character of deathlessness.

But Webster is even more obviously a poet — subordinating "the shows of things to the desires of the mind" — in his magnificent idealization, or idolization, of the Constitution and the Union. By the magic of his imagination and sensibility he contrived to impress on the minds of a majority of the people of the free States a vague, grand idea that the Constitution was a sacred instrument of government, — a holy shrine of fundamental law, which no unhallowed hands could touch without profanation, — a digested system of rights and duties, resembling those institutes which were in early times devised by the immortal gods for the guidance of infirm mortal man; and the mysterious creatures, half divine and half human, who framed this remarkable document, were always reverently referred to as "the Fathers," — as persons who excelled all succeeding generations in sagacity and wisdom; as inspired prophets, who were specially selected by Divine Providence to frame the political scriptures on which our political faith was to be based, and by which our political reason was to be limited. The splendor of the glamour thus cast over the imaginations and sentiments of the people was all the more effective because it was an effluence from the mind of a statesman who of all other statesmen of the country was deemed the most practical, and the least deluded by any misguiding lights of fancy and abstract speculation.

There can be little doubt that Webster's impressive idealization of the Constitution gave a certain

narrowness to American thinking on constitutional government and the science of politics and legislation. Foreigners of the most liberal views could not sometimes restrain an expression of wonder, when they found that our most intelligent men, even our jurists and publicists, hardly condescended to notice the eminent European thinkers on the philosophy of government, so absorbed were they in the contemplation of the perfection of their own. When the great Civil War broke out, hundreds of thousands of American citizens marched to the battle-field with the grand passages of Webster glowing in their hearts. They met death cheerfully in the cause of the "Constitution and Union," as by him expounded and idealized; and if they were so unfortunate as not to be killed, but to be taken captive, they still rotted to death in Southern prisons, sustained by sentences of Webster's speeches which they had declaimed as boys in their country schools. Of all the triumphs of Webster as a leader of public opinion, the most remarkable was his infusing into the minds of the people of the free States the belief that the Constitution as it existed in his time was an organic fact, springing from the intelligence, hearts, and wills of the people of the United States, and not, as it really was, an ingenious mechanical contrivance of wise men, to which the people at the time gave their assent.

The constitutions of the separate States of the Union were doubtless rooted in the habits, senti-

ments, and ideas of their inhabitants. But the Constitution of the United States could not possess this advantage, however felicitously it may have been framed for the purpose of keeping, for a considerable period, peace between the different sections of the country. So long, therefore, as the institution of negro slavery lasted, it could not be called a Constitution of States organically "United;" for it lacked the principle of *growth*, which characterizes all constitutions of government which are really adapted to the progressive needs of a people, if the people have in them any impulse which stimulates them to advance. The unwritten constitution of Great Britain has this advantage, — that a decree of Parliament can alter the whole representative system, annihilating by a vote of the two houses all laws which the Parliament had enacted in former years. In Great Britain, therefore, a measure which any Imperial Parliament passes becomes at once the supreme law of the land, though it may nullify a great number of laws which previous Parliaments had passed under different conditions of the sentiment of the nation. Our Constitution, on the other hand, provides for the contingencies of growth in the public sentiment only by amendments to the Constitution. These amendments require more than a majority of all the political forces represented in Congress; and Mr. Calhoun, foreseeing that a collision must eventually occur between the two sections, carried with him, not only the South, but a considerable minority of

the North, in resisting any attempt to limit the *extension* of slavery. On this point the passions and principles of the people of the slave-holding and the majority of the people of the non-slave-holding States came into violent opposition; and there was no possibility that any amendment to the Constitution could be ratified, which would represent either the growth of the Southern people in their ever-increasing belief that negro slavery was not only a good in itself, but a good which ought to be extended, or the growth of the Northern people in their ever-increasing hostility both to slavery and its extension. Thus two principles, each organic in its nature, and demanding indefinite development, came into deadly conflict under the mechanical forms of a Constitution which was not organic.

A considerable number of Webster's speeches are devoted to denunciations of violations of the Constitution perpetrated by his political opponents. These violations, again, would seem to prove that written constitutions follow practically the same law of development which marks the progress of the unwritten. By a strained system of Congressional interpretation, the Constitution has been repeatedly compelled to yield to the necessities of the party dominant for the time in the government, and has, if we may believe Webster, been repeatedly changed without being constitutionally "amended." The causes which led to the most terrible civil war recorded in history were silently working beneath the

forms of the Constitution, — both parties, by the way, appealing to its provisions, — while Webster was idealizing it as the utmost which humanity could come to in the way of civil government. In 1848, when nearly all Europe was in insurrection against its rulers, he proudly said that our Constitution promised to be the *oldest*, as well as the best, in civilized States. Meanwhile the institution of negro slavery was undermining the whole fabric of the Union. The moral division between the South and North was widening into a division between the religion of the two sections. The Southern statesmen, economists, jurists, publicists, and ethical writers had adapted their opinions to the demands which the defenders of the institution of slavery imposed on the action of the human intellect and conscience; but it was rather startling to discover that the Christian religion, as taught in the Southern States, was a religion which had no vital connection with the Christianity taught in the Northern States. There is nothing more astounding, to a patient explorer of the causes which led to the final explosion, than this opposition of religions. The mere form of the dogmas common to the religion of both sections might be verbally identical; but a volume of sermons by a Southern doctor of divinity, so far as he touched on the matter of slavery, was as different from one published by his Northern brother, in the essential moral and humane elements of Christianity, as though they were divided from each other by a gulf as wide as

that which yawns between a Druid priest and a Christian clergyman.

The politicians of the South — whether they were the mouthpieces of the ideas and passions of their constituents, or were, as Webster probably thought, more or less responsible for their foolishness and bitterness — were ever eager to precipitate a conflict, which Webster was as eager to prevent, or at least to postpone. It was fortunate for the North that the inevitable conflict did not come in 1850, when the free States were unprepared for it. Ten years of discussion and preparation were allowed; when the war broke out, it found the North in a position to meet and eventually to overcome the enemies of the Union; and the Constitution, not as it *was*, but as it *is*, now represents a form of government which promises to be permanent; for after passing through its baptism of fire and blood, the Constitution contains nothing which is not in harmony with any State government founded on the principle of equal rights which it guarantees, and is proof against all attacks but those which may proceed from the extremes of human folly and wickedness. But that before the Civil War it was preserved so long under conditions which constantly threatened it with destruction, is due in a considerable degree to the circumstance that it found in Daniel Webster its poet as well as its "expounder."

In conclusion, it may be said that the style of Webster is pre-eminently distinguished by manliness. Nothing little, weak, whining, or sentimental can be

detected in any page of the six volumes of his Works. A certain strength and grandeur of personality is prominent in all his speeches. When he says "I" or "my," he never appears to indulge in the bravado of self-assertion, because the words are felt to express a positive, stalwart, almost colossal manhood, which had already been implied in the close-knit sentences in which he embodied his statements and arguments. He is an eminent instance of the power which character communicates to style. Though evidently proud, self-respecting, and high-spirited, he is ever above mere vanity and egotism. Whenever he gives emphasis to the personal pronoun, the reader feels that he had as much earned the right to make his opinion an authority, as he had earned the right to use the words he employs to express his ideas and sentiments. Thus, in the celebrated Smith Will trial, his antagonist, Mr. Choate, quoted a decision of Lord Chancellor Camden. In his reply Webster argued against its validity as though it were merely a proposition laid down by Mr. Choate. "But it is not mine, it is Lord Camden's," was the instant retort. Webster paused for half a minute, and then, with his eye fixed on the presiding judge, he replied: "Lord Camden was a great judge; he is respected by every American, for he was on our side in the Revolution; but, may it please your honor, *I* differ from my Lord Camden." There was hardly a lawyer in the United States who could have made such a statement without exposing himself to ridicule; but it did not seem

at all ridiculous when the "I" stood for Daniel Webster. In his early career as a lawyer his mode of reasoning was such as to make him practically a thirteenth juror in the panel; when his fame was fully established, he contrived in some mysterious way to seat himself by the side of the judges on the bench, and appear to be consulting with them as a jurist, rather than addressing them as an advocate. The personality of the man was always suppressed until there seemed to be need of asserting it; and then it was proudly pushed into prominence, though rarely passing beyond the limits which his acknowledged eminence as a statesman and lawyer did not justify. Among those speeches in which his individuality becomes somewhat aggressive, and breaks loose from the restraints ordinarily self-imposed on it, may be mentioned his speech on his reception at Boston (1842), his Marshfield Speech (1848), and his speech at his reception at Buffalo (1851). Whatever may be thought of the course of argument pursued in these, they are at least thoroughly penetrated with a manly spirit, — a manliness somewhat haughty and defiant, but still consciously strong in its power to return blow for blow, from whatever quarter the assault may come.

But the real intellectual and moral manliness of Webster underlies all his great orations and speeches, even those where the animating life which gives them the power to persuade, convince, and uplift the reader's mind, seems to be altogether impersonal;

and this plain force of manhood, this sturdy grapple with every question that comes before his understanding for settlement, lead him contemptuously to reject all the meretricious aids and ornaments of mere rhetoric, and are prominent among the many exceptional qualities of his large nature, which have given him a high position among the prose-writers of his country as a consummate master of English style.

EMERSON AND CARLYLE.[1]

BACON says of private letters, that "such as are written from wise men, are, of all the words of men, in my judgment, the best; for they are more natural than orations, public speeches, and more advised than conferences or present speeches."

This remark, frequently quoted by Emerson, is evidently true of the letters which passed between him and Carlyle from 1834 to 1872. They are natural, in the sense of expressing the inmost natures of the correspondents, and are thus thoroughly sincere. But the sincerity of Emerson was that of a sweet, serene, hopeful, tolerant, wholesome, and aspiring nature; the sincerity of Carlyle was that of a nature harsh, unquiet, despondent, intolerant, despairing, and unhealthy. Both of the correspondents were eminently strong men; it was impossible that either could be swayed from his predetermined course by fear or flattery, by social ostracism or social favor, by the apprehension of poverty or the seduction of wealth; but the strength of Emerson was ever calm, while that of

[1] The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson. 1834–1872. Boston: James R. Osgood & Co. 2 vols. 12mo.

Carlyle was oftentimes spasmodic. Emerson, relying on his intuitions, was sublimely indifferent to the received opinions and accredited reputations which Carlyle savagely assailed.

The difference between the two was not merely a difference of character and experience, but a difference in respect to physical health. Brought up to receive as absolute truth the austerest doctrines of Scotch Presbyterianism, professed by a father whom he held to be the best of men, Carlyle was "destined" for the ministry. There can be little doubt that had his reason accepted the dogmas he was to preach, he would have been a preacher greater than Chalmers. The trouble was that his culture made him doubt the truth of the dogmas he was expected to expound. In a great many instances the young students of theology glide over what offends them at first sight in the rigid articles of their creed, and become clergymen by relative superficiality of mind and character, without imagination enough to realize the terrible consequences of the articles to which they subscribe in the laudable desire to "make a living." They wish to be married; they wish to do good in practising their profession; and, happy in a wife and family devoted to them, they preach in the morning the doctrine of divine wrath to the children of men, and then in the evening mingle cheerfully with their flock, and are the most genial, entertaining, instructive, helpful, and humane of the company they call together. Their humanity triumphs over their theology; they insensibly modify the harsh

elements of their theoretical creed when they are in actual contact with the practical needs of their congregations; and no fair-minded person who has a large acquaintance with our towns and villages, could think of the abolition of our Christian churches and pastors without a shudder of apprehension for the prospects of our civilization. Whatever may be the special creeds which the clergymen profess, they resolutely stand for absolute principles of ethics in practical life, and for larger ideas in philosophy than obtain in their respective parishes.

But Carlyle, after endeavoring to realize to his reason, heart, and imagination the dogmas of the religious creed in which he had been brought up, came to the conclusion that he could not accept it, and became a man of letters in despair of submitting his intelligence to the stern doctrines of the Church of Scotland. The struggle in a mind so vigorous and a character so strong as his between what he wished to believe and what he found he could not believe, was accompanied by agonies of spiritual experience similar to that through which Luther and Bunyan passed: but Carlyle came out of his spiritual struggle an incurable dyspeptic, while in the case of Luther and Bunyan we are not informed that the disturbances in their souls left any permanent derangements in their digestion. Carlyle became dyspeptic not only in his stomach, but in his brain and heart; and his whole view of life here and hereafter, of history and of contemporary annals, was discolored and distorted

from the fact that his indigestion extended to the very centre of his spiritual being. Existence was to him a questionable blessing, for his will, his genius, his conscience, and his poverty exacted from him the duty of constant labor; and labor brought him, according to his own account, none of the sweet compensations of labor. He had in him a certain barbaric force, — a force compared with which all civilized energy appears comparatively weak; but he was an invalid barbarian, on whom the culture of Europe had been lavished, and the sick giant wailed and mourned and growled and sometimes almost blasphemed during the whole period in which he resolutely toiled. He preached the gospel of work, and acted up to its severest requirements; but the gospel gave no joy to the workman. In his utmost stress of poverty he wrote to Emerson: "Me Mammon will pay or not, as he finds convenient; buy me he will not." One is reminded of Dr. South's statement that "it is hard to maintain truth, but still harder to be maintained by it."

Emerson, on the contrary, had no experiences in his early life at all resembling those of Carlyle. He was born in a family where the fear of God was absorbed in the love of God. His soul was infused with cheer from his infancy. He entered and passed through college without a blemish on his name. He became by "natural selection" a Unitarian minister, and did his appointed work to the entire satisfaction of his parish. No clergyman was ever more heartily loved than he by those who listened to his discourses and

were favored with his Christian companionship. He brought cheer and hope into every household where he appeared. There are many unpublished memorials celebrating the effect which the sweet and unaffected sanctity of his character produced in towns remote from Boston, when he "exchanged" services with his brother clergymen. One letter, written by the most cultivated and self-sacrificing woman then living in Massachusetts, testified that the Unitarian Association had sent, for one Sunday, to the Northampton Unitarians an angel when the latter only asked for a preacher. But Emerson found in the Unitarian body some rule which he considered to limit his entire independence, and he quietly abandoned his connection with the denomination and retired to his country home to think and to study freely, without any Association qualified to call him to account for heresy even with respect to the doctrines of Unitarianism. All this was done without any shock either to his soul or to his digestion. He never lost his physical health, and remained to the last perfectly serene in all spiritual as well as in all practical matters. No man loved and reverenced God more than he, or feared him less. He is an extraordinary instance of a man of religious genius, passing through religious changes, without being submitted to any stress and storm of religious passion.

This was the Emerson who at the age of thirty visited for one day Carlyle at his lonely residence of Craigenputtock. He stayed but for a day; but the im-

pression he made both on Carlyle and his wife was permanent, and led to a life-long friendship. Years afterward, Mrs. Carlyle wrote that she could never forget the visitor who had descended "out of the clouds, as it were," into their desert, "and made one day there look like enchantment for us, and left me weeping that it was only one day." Carlyle himself reckoned only three "happinesses" that had occurred to him in the year 1833, — the first two of which were trivial, but the third of memorable importance; for the third happiness was the visit of Emerson, who appeared both to Jane and himself as "one of the most lovable creatures they had ever looked on."

On Emerson's return to the United States, the correspondence between the two began by a letter from Emerson, dated May, 1834, in which he welcomes "Sartor Resartus," glories in the brave stand that the author has made for spiritualism, but is repelled by the oddity of the vehicle chosen to convey "this treasure," and looks forward to the time "when the word will be as simple, and so as resistless, as the thought." Indeed, Emerson was for many years dissatisfied with the strange liberties which his friend took with the English language. He wrote, in 1835, that he cherished a "salutary horror of the German style of 'Sartor Resartus.'" It was only long after this letter that, in recommending Carlyle's "Cromwell" to a friend, he was met by the ordinary objection to the writer's style. "Read him for his style,"

was Emerson's emphatic rejoinder; and indeed, if the excellence of a style be judged according to the felicity with which it expresses and embodies a peculiar individual nature, the style of Carlyle is unobjectionable. It is only when his imitators write in *Carlylese*, that we perceive how pernicious that dialect of the English tongue is as a model, and how ridiculous it becomes in other hands than his own. It would be difficult to select a sentence of Emerson in which its peculiarities appear. Yet, while Emerson protests against the "grotesque Teutonic apocalyptic strain" of the book, he admits that it may be inevitable that the strange jargon, as it seems to him, is Carlyle's most natural method of utterance; "for," he declares, "are not all our little circlets of will as so many little eddies rounded in by the great Circle of Necessity? and could the Truth-speaker, perhaps now the best thinker of the Saxon race, have written otherwise? And must we not say that Drunkenness is a virtue rather than that Cato has erred?" Is it possible to conceive that recognition and reproof could be more genially and gracefully combined?

This letter led to a correspondence between the two friends which was continued, with intervals of silence, for forty years. In richness and fulness of matter, there is nothing superior, nothing — one is prompted to say — equal to it in literary annals. The sentences which a reviewer would be inclined to quote are so numerous that, if he indulged his inclination, he would be in danger of infringing the law of copyright.

There will, of course, be a wide immediate demand for the book from that large portion of cultivated readers who are stimulated by mere intellectual curiosity; but the volumes so swarm with striking thoughts, and, in old Ben Jonson's vernacular, are so "rammed with life," that we can confidently predict they will be read a century hence with delight. They are specially interesting as recording the intimate communion of two of the most original minds, and two of the most contrasted individualities, which our century has produced. It would seem, at the first glance, that it was impossible for two such men to be bound together in a vital friendship, — a friendship which the lapse of time and frequent disagreement in opinion and action only rendered more close and indissoluble.

The difference, indeed, between the two men impresses the reader on almost every page. Emerson was the champion of the Ideal; Carlyle asserted the absolute dominion of Fact. Emerson declared that Truth is mighty, and will prevail; Carlyle retorted that Truth is mighty, and has prevailed. Emerson looked serenely at the ugly aspect of contemporary life, because, as an optimist, he was a herald of the Future; Carlyle, as a pessimist, denounced the Present, and threw all the energy of his vivid dramatic genius into vitalizing the Past. Emerson was a prophet; Carlyle, a resurrectionist. Emerson gloried in what was to be; Carlyle exulted in what had been. Emerson declared, even when current events appeared ugliest to the philanthropist, that "the

highest thought and the deepest love is born with Victory on his head," and must triumph in the end; Carlyle, gloomily surveying the present, insisted that high thought and deep love must be sought and found in generations long past, which Dr. Dryasdust had so covered up with his mountains of mud, that it was only by immense toil he (Carlyle) had been able to reproduce them as they actually existed. Look up, says Emerson, cheerily; "hitch your wagon to a star;" Look down, growls Carlyle, "and see that your wagon is an honest one, safe and strong in passing over miry roads, before you have the impudence to look up to the smallest star in the rebuking heavens."

The practical value of Emerson's friendship was proved by his strenuous efforts to disseminate Carlyle's works in the United States, and by pledging his own credit to pay the expenses of their republication. In this way all the profits of the volumes, less the publisher's commission for selling them, were sent to Carlyle. That magnificent prose epic, "The French Revolution," fell almost dead on the English public; while in the United States it was so warmly welcomed, that the author obtained the remuneration for writing it principally from his admirers in this country, inspired by Emerson's enthusiasm for the lone, unappreciated creator of an immortal work. But there is something comical in the business relations between the two friends. Neither understands bookkeeping, or has penetrated into the mysteries of an

account current. Emerson is always doubtful as to the question whether he has got his money's worth from the publishers, but still sends scores of pounds sterling to the famishing author; Carlyle gladly pockets the coin, but is more helpless than Emerson himself in understanding whether he has been cheated or not. To Carlyle, all publishers are "hideous;" but he thinks that Fraser (of "the sand magazine") is less hideous than the others, because he has become more accustomed to him. At last, Emerson, by calling into the conference one of the ablest of Boston merchants, together with the American representative of Baring Brothers, and the cashier of a Boston bank, finds that the publishers are about right. But it is ludicrous to think of such great experts in accounts brought in to decide upon a matter of a few pounds and shillings.

Meanwhile, Carlyle had "become a name." A New York bookselling and publishing firm, dissatisfied with the terms on which they could purchase Carlyle's books, and finding that it would pay to reprint them, began or threatened to issue them in cheaper editions. This they had a perfect legal right to do, whatever may be said of the "courtesy" title, which was afterward, by the leading publishing firms, accorded to the first American reprinter of a foreign author's works. If any English writer had a right to complain of the absence of international copyright, it was Dickens; for his popularity in this country was so immense that if an American friend had under-

taken to do for him what Emerson did for Carlyle, and his claim had been admitted by the booksellers, the gains of Dickens would have been scores of thousands of dollars from the United States alone. Emerson, however, seems to have considered Carlyle an exception. No decent publisher, though he made but a few hundred dollars by the transaction, should dare to touch his special rights by unauthorized reprints. The result was a number of indignant letters between the friends, in which all the resources of ingenious invective were lavished on the unhappy "pirate." When "Past and Present" was on the eve of publication, Emerson suggested an arrangement with his irascible friend, to have the volume issued simultaneously in England and in this country. Carlyle replies: "The practical business is: How to cut out that New York scoundrel, who fancies that, because there is no gallows, it is permitted to steal? I have a distinct desire to do that, altogether apart from the money to be gained thereby. A friend's goodness ought not to be frustrated by a scoundrel destitute of gallows." Then follows a letter in which he prophesies that "the gibbetless thief in New York will beat us after all;" and Emerson despairingly answers, "You are no longer secure of any respect to your property in our freebooting America." Now all this "Much Ado About Little" came from the simple fact that one prominent bookseller quarrelled with another on a question of the proper discount to be made from the retail price of one or two books of

necessarily limited circulation. Emerson made the mistake of insisting that the retail dealer in Carlyle's works should have the most beggarly commission on the volumes he displayed on his counters. He thus checked the sale of the writings he most desired to circulate. Who would venture to order twenty copies of a book, without being pretty sure that he would not lose by the bargain in case he sold only twelve?

It is well known that Emerson's appreciation of the fine genius and beautiful character of A. B. Alcott was as true as it was intense. He considered him the most inspired converser in the country; but he also affirmed that what he wrote and published gave but the slightest indication of his powers, — that with him the tongue was a more potent instrument of expression than the pen. Indeed, Mr. Alcott was a born idealist, unflinchingly applying the principles of his philosophy to the ordinary practical concerns of life. There is a story current of a certain sturdy politician, who remained faithful to his party and sect until his death in extreme old age. It was alleged that in a minute after his birth he exclaimed, "Now I want all you people fooling round here to understand that I am born a Jeffirsonian Dimmicrat in politics, and a Univarsalist in religion; and don't you forgit it." The legend goes on to say that he would not take a sip of mother's milk until the rigid conditions on which he condescended to accept existence were complied with. One can imagine

that the infant Alcott might have announced as peremptorily that he was to be brought up as a Pythagorean in diet and a Platonist in philosophy. At any rate, he was the sweetest, the most serene, the most humane of human beings; and even when he carried his ideas to extremes in conduct, all who knew and loved him had the widest toleration for his eccentricities.

When Mr. Alcott went to Europe, in 1842, Emerson commended him to Carlyle in a characteristic fashion: "Let the stranger, when he arrives at your gate, make a new and primary impression. Be sure to forget what you have heard of him; and if you have ever read anything to which his name is attached, be sure to forget that. You may love him, or hate him, or apathetically pass by him, as your genius shall dictate; only I entreat this, that you do not let him go quite out of your reach until you are sure that you have seen him, and know for certain the nature of the man."

And, in his next letter, he adds: "My friend Alcott must have visited you before this, and you have seen whether any relation could subsist between men so differently excellent." Indeed, that was the exact relation between Carlyle and Emerson.

Emerson must have feared the impression which the optimistic Alcott would make on the somewhat cynical pessimist, the literary Diogenes of the Despotism of Letters, as contrasted with the old time "Republic" of the same name. Carlyle tried "to be

good," — the phrase which his wife used when his irritable temper was softened by friendship, or by a dinner which oppressed his stomach less than usual, — and he wrote back to Emerson that his friend was found to be "a genial, innocent, simple-hearted man, of much natural intelligence and goodness, with an air of rusticity, veracity, and dignity withal, which in many ways appeals to me. The good Alcott, — with his long, lean face and figure, with his gray, worn temples and mild, radiant eyes, all bent on saving the world by a return to acorns and the Golden Age, — he comes before one like a venerable Don Quixote, whom nobody can even laugh at without loving." Emerson replied: "As you do not seem to have seen in him his pure and noble intellect, I fear that it lies under some new and denser clouds." Alcott was evidently disappointed with his reception. It was rumored, at the time, that he wrote to Emerson in these words: "I accuse T. Carlyle of inhospitality to my thought." At any rate, he must have felt, to employ one of his own phrases, that Carlyle "was not *ins*-pirate, but *des*-perate." He brought back to New England a follower or two, whom Carlyle styled Alcott's "English Tail;" and he implored Emerson to avoid it. "Bottomless imbeciles," he wrote, "ought not to be seen in company with Ralph Waldo Emerson, who has already *men* listening to him on this side of the water. The 'Tail' has an individual or two of that genus, and the rest is mainly undecided. For example, I know old —— myself; and

can testify, if you will believe me, that few greater blockheads (if 'blockhead may mean exasperated imbecile,' and the ninth part of a thinker) broke the world's bread in his day. Have a care of such!" It must be admitted that the "Tail" of the returning philosopher did him no honor, and led him into some absurdities; but such mistakes were merely chance incidents in a life which has been devoted to all noble and honorable ends. Emerson's shrewdness and good sense saved him from any participation in the follies of the "Tail."

Thomas Carlyle had a wonderful power of sketching, in a few words, physical and mental portraits of the men he met, somewhat resembling the skill of Thomas Nast in the grotesque caricatures he has contributed to "Harper's Weekly." The two Thomases had this in common, that every peculiarity of face, feature, shape of the head, color of the hair, movement of the body, or any other merely physical characteristic, was made significant of mental or moral qualities in the person delineated. Nast contributed, more than anybody else, to the overthrow of "the Tweed Ring" which ruled, robbed, and might have ruined New York; and he did it by his marvellous appeals to the eye of the ordinary honest voter, who was perhaps incompetent to form a rational opinion of rascalities through words addressed to his reason and imagination. "Oh, them picters!" groaned Tweed; "that was what wrecked us!" Carlyle's portraits by the pen are similar to those of Nast by

the pencil, inasmuch as they agree in connecting physiology with psychology, and making a man's inward nature correspond to the exaggerated traits of his bodily organization.

Carlyle could not restrain this tendency of his mind, even in characterizing his friends. Much as he delighted in Emerson's books, he complained that his thoughts, though full of soul, lacked body. His own thinking, even on the highest themes, tended to embody itself in palpable forms; and, except in the vague background of his word-pictures, where the Eternal came in, his imagination really "bodied forth" that which his spiritual eye discerned. In the moods in which he appeared as a humorist and satirist, — as distinguished from his loftiest moods in which he appeared as a thinker and seer, — his wit and humor rushed by instinct into forms truly Rabelaisian. In particular, he cannot help letting his mind run riot in picturing individuals. Thus he speaks, in 1837, of his friend, Miss Martineau, as "a genuine little poetess, buckramed, swathed like a mummy into socinian and political-economy formulas; and yet verily alive in the inside of that!" In a letter, dated November, 1838, he invites Emerson to visit England, and after mentioning several men who will welcome him, he adds that "old Rogers, with his pale head, — white, bare, and cold as snow, — will work on you with those large, blue eyes, cruel, sorrowful, and that sardonic shelf-chin." He met Webster in England, in 1839, and he writes to his

friend: "Not many days ago, I saw at breakfast the notablest of all your notabilities, Daniel Webster. He is a magnificent specimen; you might say to all the world, 'This is your Yankee Englishman; such limbs we make in Yankeeland.' As a logic-fencer, advocate, or parliamentary Hercules, one would be inclined to back him at first sight against all the extant world. The tanned complexion, that amorphous, crag-like face; the dull, black eyes, under their precipice of brows, like dull anthracite furnaces, needing only to be blown; the mastiff-mouth, accurately closed, — I have not traced as much of silent Berserkir-rage, that I remember of, in any other man." After this comes a portrait of Walter Savage Landor: "A tall, broad, burly man, with gray hair, and large, fierce-rolling eyes; of the most restless, impetuous vivacity, not to be held in by the most perfect breeding, — expressing itself in high-colored superlatives, indeed, in reckless exaggeration, now and then in a short dry laugh, not of sport, but of mockery; a wild man, whom no extent of culture had been able to tame." Landor was the original of Dickens's Boythorn, in "Bleak House;" but is there not much of Boythorn in Carlyle's own wild diatribes against things and persons? Milnes, one of the English friends who most appreciated him, he describes as "a pretty, little robin-redbreast of a man." How cruel this is! Sumner told the present writer that, about the time when Carlyle wrote this to Emerson, he was a guest at one of Rogers's breakfasts, and had

occasion to mention, with great warmth, the merits of Carlyle as a writer and thinker. He found not the slightest response from the many eminent men present; and Milnes, who sat near him, whispered in his ear that he perfectly agreed with him, but that he was the only Englishman present who sympathized with Sumner's admiration of the great man.

Tennyson was another friend of Carlyle. The latter liked him as a companion, but often lectured and hectored him on the folly of writing in verse. He is described in these volumes (1844) "as one of the finest-looking men in the world. A great shock of rough, dusty-dark hair; bright, laughing hazel eyes; massive, aquiline face — most massive, yet most delicate; of sallow-brown complexion, almost Indian-looking; clothes cynically loose, free-and-easy; smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musically metallic, fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous: I do not meet, in these late decades, such company over a pipe." Tennyson, if he chose, could tell strange stories of the many controversies in which the two smokers engaged, which the soothing influence of tobacco could not prevent from occasionally assuming an irritating and almost furious form of disagreement. A friend of both was once present at a conversation between the two, in which Carlyle apologized for the horrible cruelties inflicted by William the Conqueror on his Saxon subjects, as

minutely narrated by Tennyson. The discussion waxed warm between the accuser and the defender of the accused; Carlyle becoming all the more exasperating from the pitying way in which he condescended to inform Tennyson that he did not know how savage populations should be governed, when their government was intrusted to a firm hand, utterly regardless of Exeter Hall philanthropy and the sentimentality of writers of verses. In 1867, Carlyle writes to Emerson that he and a lady friend had read Tennyson's "Idyls of the King" "with profound recognition of the finely elaborated execution, and also of the inward perfection of vacancy, and, to say truth, with considerable impatience at being treated so very like infants, though the lollipops were so superlative. We gladly changed for one of Emerson's 'English Traits,' and read that, with increasing and ever increasing satisfaction every evening, blessing Heaven that there were still books for grown-up people too." There is really something subtle in this criticism, exaggerated as its tone of condemnation is; and most readers of the "Idyls" must feel its force, however much they may like the poems. Amid all the clash of arms, and the heroic deeds of Tennyson's heroes, they must have a feeling of that "inward vacancy" of the true knightly spirit. It would be difficult to define in what this inward vacancy consists; but it is not felt by the reader of Scott's heroic romances, or of Carlyle's "Heroes and the Heroic in History."

Nothing injured Carlyle more, in the opinion of those Americans who most admired and appreciated his genius, than the position he took in regard to negro slavery. Before our Civil War broke out he had declared his conviction that "Quashee" must be compelled to work even by the stimulus of the lash. He always raved whenever he spoke of the lazy African; and he always spelled negro with two *g*'s. He appeared absolutely insane, or inhuman, whenever the "nigger" question came before his judgment for settlement. Some thirty years ago, a radical club was established in Boston, composed of members representing every variety of political, religious, and philosophical dissent. The walls of the room where the members assembled were lined with photographs of the most prominent foreign and domestic champions of things as they "ought to be." On one evening Emerson made some remarks on a purely intellectual topic, having no possible relation to slavery, except the slavery of even the educated mind of the country to routine, and Carlyle was referred to as one of its most earnest opponents. Then Garrison rose from his seat, glared through his spectacles at the portrait of Carlyle, and said that no club of humane and hopeful men could look at that face without horror and disgust, and he trusted that the moral sentiment of those present would demand, not that the portrait should be taken down, but that it should be turned to the wall, so that the hateful lineaments of that enemy of freedom might not affront the eyes of any honest

reformer. Of course the advice was not followed; but it showed the intensity of hatred which the great leader of the Abolitionists felt for the cynical defender of the policy which would scourge the negro to his daily task, if he would not go to it willingly. The truth is that Carlyle was himself whipped on by his sense of duty to undertake work in which he found little enjoyment and much pain; and he considered that others should be made to do by outward compulsion what he did, against the grain, by inward strength of will. One of the most striking epistles in this correspondence is the letter to Emerson, in August, 1849, in which he furiously inveighs against the pauperism of Ireland. Nearly one half of the whole population, he says, receives "Poor-Law rations," while the land is uncultivated, and the landlords are hiding from bailiffs. "Such a state of things was never heard of under this sky before. . . . 'What is to be done?' asks every one. . . . 'Blacklead these two million idle beggars,' I sometimes advised, 'and sell them in Brazil as niggers, — perhaps Parliament, on sweet constraint, will allow you to advance them to be niggers!'" Of course this burst of wrath, if taken as an expression of opinion, would rather befit the King of Dahomey, after he had imbibed a more than usual amount of "fire-water," than a civilized human being; but through all this grotesque exaggeration there runs this principle, that all persons who will not work for a living should be either forced to work for it, or should cease to live.

He detested all philanthropy which saved lazy people from the consequences of their laziness. "Let them work or die," seems to have been his austere motto; "and the sooner they die, the better. Clean the earth of these unclean things who have the impudence to declare their right to *ex*-ist, while they depend on the charity of real laborers to *sub*-sist."

When he applied this principle, that pauperism was the worst of crimes, to our Civil War, he was met by the obvious objection that about all the work done at the South was done by "niggers;" that the owners of these "niggers" devoted most of their time to that constitutional palaver which he held in special abhorrence; and that, as "captains of industry," they did little or nothing to promote, advance, or increase the remuneration of Labor. A New Englander invented the cotton-gin; they stole the invention, starved the inventor, and then were careless of almost all other improvements by which one machine does the work of a hundred men. They necessarily made the South poor; and then went to war because they conceived that the poverty of the South was owing to the encroachments of the North on their constitutional rights. During the war Carlyle was on the side of the Confederates; and the warm feeling with which Emerson regarded his friend palpably cooled. Meanwhile Carlyle's fiercest libels on the North were not contained in letters to Emerson. Some were published in organs of English opinion; some were uttered to Americans who called upon him at his Chelsea home; and there is a

rumor that he condensed his opinion on the whole matter to the accomplished editor of these volumes in the following words, delivered in his broadest Scotch accent: "And as for your war, it seems to me simply this: that the South said to the nigger, 'God bless you and be a slave;' and the North said, 'G—— d—— you, and be a freeman!'" After the war was closed, Emerson tells him, in 1870, "Every reading person in America holds you in exceptional regard. . . . They have forgotten your scarlet sins before or during the war. I have long ceased to apologize for or explain your savage sayings about America or other republics, or publics, and am willing that anointed men bearing with them authentic charters shall be laws to themselves, as Plato willed." Indeed, it would seem that the American mind has a very feeble memory: a few years roll on, and benefactors and traducers are alike forgotten; and the animosities of the past slip out of the public heart and brain, intently engaged as both are in the Present and the Future.

As almost every letter of this unique correspondence suggests topics on which a reviewer is tempted to comment, it is difficult to stay the hand while writing about it. The letters of Carlyle represent him both at his best and his worst; the letters of Emerson throng with thoughts and experiences, and the style is as compact and brilliant as that of his published essays. These friends write to each other because they have something to say; and they say it with all the care and labor in composition which they would have

exerted in works directly written for the public eye. The perfect sincerity of each is preserved; every reflection and sentiment is genuine and true to character; yet the form of expression displays none of the diffuseness and slovenliness common to the familiar correspondence of even eminent men. Perhaps this brief notice of a book which is destined to last for a century or two, at least, cannot be more appropriately brought to an end than by referring to a single incident which brought the hearts of the two strong men into close and pathetic communion. Emerson lost "the hyacinthine boy," the subject of his "Threnody." He had, he writes to Carlyle, other children, "but a promise like that boy's I shall never see. How often I have pleased myself that one day I should send to you this Morning Star of mine, and stay at home so gladly behind such a representative. I dare not fathom the Invisible and Untold to inquire what relations to my Departed ones I yet sustain. Lydian, the poor Lydian, moans at home by day and night. You, too, will grieve for us, afar." This letter reached Carlyle when he was in Dumfries, called thither by the intelligence of the death of his wife's mother. "It is many years," he replies, "since I have stood so in close contact face to face with the reality of Earth, with its haggard ugliness, its divine beauty, its depths of Death and of Life. Yesterday, one of the stillest Sundays, I sat long by the side of the swift river Nith; sauntered among woods all vocal only with rooks and pairing birds. The hills are often white with snow-

powder; black, brief spring-tempests rush fiercely down from them, and then again the sky looks forth with a pale, pure brightness, — like Eternity from behind Time. The sky, when one thinks of it, is always blue, pure, changeless azure; rains and tempests are only for the little dwellings where men abide. Let us think of this, too. Think of this, thou sorrowing mother! Thy boy has escaped many showers."

EMERSON AS A POET.

THE death of the greatest of American men of letters — a man who was at once an elemental thinker and an elemental power — immediately drew forth such a series of tributes to his genius and character from such a wide variety of thoughtful minds, that it is difficult at this date to say anything of him which has not been said before. But perhaps in surveying him as a poet, some additional reasons may be given in proof that he was original in the sense in which the word is applied to the recognized masters of song.

In estimating the relative worth and rank of a poet, we are bound to consider not merely his possession of "the vision and the faculty divine," but the penetration and extent of his vision and the originality of his faculty. Did his spiritual insight go deeper than that of other poets of his age and generation? Did he advance beyond the recognized frontier of the ideal world in his time, and add a new province to it?

Were his verses imitations or revelations? Did his poetic faculty work on old materials, adding only an individual flavor to new combinations of the old; or did he create or spiritually discern new materials for poetic treatment? In the case of Emerson, these questions can be answered only by a survey of what had been done by the great poets of the century, when (to use General Sheridan's significant phrase) he "took the affair in hand."

Everybody in the least acquainted with the history of the literature of Great Britain knows that during the later years of the last century an insurrection broke out against the tyranny of the school of Dryden and Pope, as exercised by their degenerate successors. This revolt was called "a going back to Nature;" and Burns and Cowper, each from a widely different point of view, exemplified it in fresh and original poems. One of Burns's songs, or one of Cowper's minute descriptions of natural objects, when placed by the side of the conventional verse or rather the rhymed prose of the time, made the latter appear thin in substance, meagre in meaning, and entirely destitute of any poetic quality whatever. There was no possibility of a new Dryden or Pope coming forth to vindicate the worth of the old poetic method; that method was then represented in the vapid translations of Hoole and the plaintive imbecilities of Hayley; and after Burns had sung and Cowper had described, there could be no revival of the poetry of Nature which did not deny the validity of the conventional canons and

standards of "taste" which such critics as Dr. Johnson had announced. Whatever may have been the merits of the wits and poets of the Age of Queen Anne, it must be confessed that the rebellion against their authority ended in producing a new era in English poetry, comparable only to that great outburst of poetic inspiration which occurred in what is called the Age of Elizabeth.

The man who stands in literary history as the head and heart of this revolution was William Wordsworth. He it was who first, among the poets of his day, aimed not only to describe but to interpret Nature. By constant communion with her forms and varying aspects he came at last to see that she was spiritually *alive*, — that his own soul was not only touched and inspired by intently viewing her external shows and appearances, but that the soul animating Nature was akin to his own; and that if

> "The discerning intellect of man
> Were wedded to this goodly universe
> In love and holy passion,"

the fantastic dreams of the old mythological poets would be more than realized, — would, indeed, be

> "A simple produce of the common day."

And then, anticipating this marriage of the mind which pervades the universe of matter with the mind of man, he professes to write in advance its mystic epithalamium: —

"I, long before the blissful hour arrives,
Would chant, in lonely peace, the spousal hour
Of this great consummation; and by words
Which speak of nothing more than what we are,
Would I arouse the sensual from their sleep
Of death, and win the vacant and the vain
To noble raptures."

It is needless to state how long Wordsworth worked, year after year, in many forms of poetic expression, to inculcate his poetic creed to an unresponsive and unsympathetic public. The creed itself only became popular when it was taken up by Byron; and then the splendor and passion of Byron's rhetoric made it accepted, though it did not necessarily make it understood. Most of the eminent poets of the century more or less felt the influence of Wordsworth's fundamental conception of Nature as spiritually alive; in poem after poem they reproduced it, modified, of course, by their own individuality and way of looking at Nature and man. But in no literary history of the nineteenth century has Wordsworth's priority in the matter been fully recognized. Now, nothing is more capable of demonstration than the fact that in the summer of 1798 Wordsworth visited the ruins of Tintern Abbey, and that in a few days he wrote the poem under that name which introduced into English poetry an element it never had before, and has never parted with since. Chronologically, it precedes everything in the same strain written by Byron, Shelley, or any other poet of the time; and, in addition to this, the circumstances under which it was written plainly indicate that

its thoughts and sentiments had long been familiar to his experience, and had, indeed, been domesticated in his soul before he poured them forth in those memorable lines. In his note to the poem he simply says:

"*Tintern Abbey, July*, 1798. — No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this. I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of four or five days with my sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it written down till I reached Bristol."

Indeed, he only finished it in time to be printed in that volume of "Lyrical Ballads," the conjoint production of Coleridge and himself, which at once marked an era in English literature, and gave the proprietor of the copyright good cause for moaning. Cottle, the publisher, tells us that "the sale was so low, and the severity of most of the reviews so great, that its progress to oblivion seemed to be certain." He printed five hundred copies of a volume that contained "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey," — not to mention "We are Seven," and other pieces of Wordsworth now universally popular, — and was glad to get rid of them as best he could. Afterward, in selling out his stock to the Longmans, he found the copyright of the "Lyrical Ballads" was valued at *nil;* and he had therefore the pleasure of returning it to the authors, as a present which might be good for something to them, though it had proved worse than good for nothing to him.

From this inauspicious beginning the grand poetic revolution of the nineteenth century tottered and stumbled on for a number of years, until Byron popularized it. The "Lyrical Ballads" indicated the two extremes of Wordsworth's genius. In "We are Seven," he showed that a simplicity of style bordering very nearly on the literal sing-song of a nursery rhyme might, if it had genuine feeling back of it, touch and unseal fountains of emotion in the universal human heart; that a poet can be thoroughly childlike, abounding in the joyous consciousness of life, without degenerating into childishness, which is the pathetic sign of the senility of that second childhood which is the dreadful reverse of the first; and that the refusal of the guileless child to admit the idea of death into her mind shows that the glad perception of the possession of life is a prophecy of its indefinite continuance. It is curious that this little poem — the one by which Wordsworth is universally known, which is in all school-books, and which has been committed to memory by thousands ignorant of his other works — would never have been printed had the advice of a near and dear friend of the author been taken. This friend found little fault with other pieces contained in the volume; but he implored Wordsworth not to make himself "everlastingly ridiculous" by including "We are Seven" in the collection. Men of original genius, like Wordsworth and Emerson, are easily indifferent to the invectives or gibes of their pronounced enemies; the real dan-

ger comes from professed friends, who beg them, from the best of motives, to distrust their genius whenever its audacities give too violent a shock to accredited notions of "taste."

If "We are Seven" represents the simplest expression of Wordsworth's genius, the lines on Tintern Abbey represent its loftiest. Artistically the poem is almost perfect. Though written in blank verse, it has such a deep, impassioned undertone of melody, and its transitions from one mental mood to another are so finely harmonized, that Wordsworth was partly justified in his hope that it might be called an "ode." After describing his youthful delight in the forms and colors of Nature, when they needed no interest "unborrowed of the eye," but were to him "as an appetite" and "haunted him like a passion," he goes on to state the compensations which in after years thought and imagination supplied for the departure of youthful impulse and ecstasy.

"That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed, — for such loss, I would believe
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on Nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Not harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A Presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

In this passage we have the spiritual side of Wordsworth. He had fairly earned the right to have this interior life and meaning of Nature revealed to him, because from his pure youth to his pure manhood he had been her worshipper. She yielded to him the secret of some of her spiritual laws, as she yielded to Newton, one after another, her physical laws. Intense devotion to her was the condition on which she distributed her favors, giving impartially to seer or scientist the wages due to his love and work. The victories of the scientist, however, are palpable; his discoveries can be demonstrated, so that to refuse belief in them is a confession of ignorance and weakness of understanding. On the contrary, the discoveries of the poet depend for their reception and verification on the mental and moral condition and experience of his readers. He has no mathematical tests by which to convict his unsympathetic critics of stupidity or lack of spiritual perception; accordingly, just in proportion as he departs from mechanical rules in announcing the results of his vital inspiration, his very superiority to his critics furnishes the grounds for his condemnation.

Wordsworth was, during the largest portion of his life, the victim of hostile criticism. It is commonly

taken for granted, even at the present day, that this criticism was provoked and justified by his own faults and absurdities in carrying his revolt against the current poetic diction of the last century to a ridiculous excess. Jeffrey, it is persistently said, only exposed and held up to scorn the poet's puerilities, commonplaces, and obvious violations of good taste, — that is, the literary sins which Wordsworth committed through his passion for "the natural" in poetic expression. The fact is, that the "Edinburgh Review," in its long fight with Wordsworth, objected not so much to "the natural" as to the supernatural element in his poems. While happily ridiculing some examples of the bald realism of the poet in describing his rustic heroes and heroines, it admitted that he was a wonderfully accurate observer of external Nature, and that he sympathized deeply with the primal affections of the human heart. Its contempt was specially reserved for the poet's spiritual philosophy of Nature, which it called "stuff;" year after year it continued to quote those passages in his poems which are now considered to prove his originality and excellence, as evidences of his imbecility of thought. Indeed, Jeffrey was afflicted with a kind of mental color-blindness in his criticism of Wordsworth. He denied the existence of what he was disqualified to see; and his dogmatism of judgment was in exact proportion to his lack of perception. The poet himself once declared, with unusual bitterness, that Jeffrey as a lawyer had "taken a perpetual retainer from his

own incapacity to plead against my claims to public approbation."

Probably the subtilety and depth of Wordsworth's insight into Nature is even now unappreciated by a large class of highly cultivated men of the world. He tells us, in one of his prefaces, that the secret of the loftiest poetry is hidden from confirmed worldlings, though they may themselves be competent to write brilliant and telling verses, and pass in popular estimation for poets.

It might be supposed that a man like Macaulay, with his enormous range of reading, his intimate acquaintance with many literatures, and his intercourse with the most scholarly society in Great Britain, would be able to know, as late as 1850, the real position which Wordsworth occupied in the history of English poetry; yet in July of that year he notes in his diary that he has read "The Prelude," and his opinion of it is this: "The story is the old story. There are the old raptures about mountains and cataracts; the old flimsy philosophy about the effect of scenery on the mind; the old crazy, mystical metaphysics; the endless wilderness of dull and prosaic twaddle; and here and there fine descriptions and energetic declarations interspersed." It will be seen that in this judgment Macaulay re-echoes Jeffrey's scorn of what is essential to an intelligent understanding of the poet. And to crown all, the person selected to write the biography of Wordsworth, his own nephew, —"Christopher Wordsworth, D.D., Canon of West-

minster," as he calls himself on the titlepage of his two dull octavos, — is very careful to guard his illustrious uncle from any reputation he might gain as a poet at the expense of casting doubt on his conventional orthodoxy of creed. He is as blind as a bat and deaf as an adder to the revelations which Wordsworth derived through the sight and hearing of his soul. When the biographer comes to the lines on Tintern Abbey, we naturally expect he will welcome it as the poem which inaugurated a new era in English poetry; but he does nothing of the kind. On the contrary, he thinks that "the reflecting reader" may "be of opinion that a worshipper of Nature is in danger of divinizing the creation and of dishonoring the Creator, and that therefore some portions of this poem might be perverted to serve the purposes of a popular and pantheistic philosophy." When "the reflecting reader" conceives of this "danger" to the Christian religion, whither is he to fly for consolation? Why, to the "Evening Voluntaries" of the same poet. In these he will learn that Wordsworth had no idea of "dishonoring the Creator" in announcing that he might be spiritually discerned in the material universe he had created.

These examples of the inapprehension and misconception of Wordsworth's genius by persons whose culture and position place them above the ordinary mass of readers, double the difficulty of showing in what respect Emerson advanced beyond Wordsworth, and beyond all of Wordsworth's successors, in the

spiritual interpretation of Nature. It must be taken for granted that Wordsworth's experience was the result and record of genuine insight, and that it cannot be curtly dismissed as "crazy, mystical metaphysics," before Emerson can even obtain a hearing; for he undoubtedly was more crazy and mystical than Wordsworth dared to be, while independently following in the path which Wordsworth had marked out.

It was a happy thought of a Boston newspaper editor to reprint Emerson's poem of "Good-by, proud World! I'm going Home," when his death was announced. The verses were written when the poet was a teacher in a Boston school, and his "Sylvan Home" was a boarding-house in Roxbury, only two or three miles distant, but at that time a rustic paradise of woods, rocks, and hills. In these lines he made his first poetic declaration of intellectual and moral independence. Most of the hours of the day he spent in teaching, by the accredited methods, English, Latin, elocution, and rhetoric to youths and maidens, and the duty was evidently a drudgery; for when in the afternoons he escaped to the country, he found many a secret nook, bearing no print of "vulgar feet and sacred to thought and God," where he might indulge to the utmost his communion with Nature; and then burst forth his exulting joy in his deliverance from tasks which limited the free expression of his individual genius: —

"Oh, when I am safe in my sylvan home,
I tread on the pride of Greece and Rome;
And when I am stretched beneath the pines,
Where the evening star so holy shines,
I laugh at the lore and pride of man,
At the sophist schools and the learned clan;
For what are they all, in their high conceit,
When man in the bush with God may meet?"

It is unfortunate that this poem should be generally considered as the product of his maturer years, when he escaped from Boston to his chosen home in Concord. The verses are those of a young college graduate, supporting himself by teaching school during the period he is studying to prepare himself for a profession. As the descendant of a long line of "godly ministers," Emerson was naturally drawn to the pulpit rather than to the dissecting-room or the bar; and he began his professional career as a Unitarian clergyman. Though in a few years he resigned his ministerial charge, because he differed from his church and congregation in regard to the obligation of the Lord's Supper, there is a singular unanimity of opinion as to his excellence as a pastor and preacher; and this opinion seems to have been based rather on the singular beauty and sweetness of his character than on his doctrines or his eloquence. There was a celestial something in him to which his admirers gave the word "angelic." Even his theological opponents among the Unitarians admitted the exceptional purity of his conduct and behavior, while regretting his audacities of speculation. They found that nothing they

said could provoke him into controversy; and as like a sunbeam he had glided into their sect, so like a sunbeam he glided out of it. The moment he felt that his position as a clergyman interfered with his mental liberty, he quietly dropped the "Reverend" before his name, and became plain Mr. Emerson. How deeply he sympathized with his church while he was its pastor is indicated by a hymn written on the occasion of one of its anniversaries. As this is not included in either of the two volumes of his poetical works, it may here be quoted as showing the depth, sweetness, and solemnity of his religious sentiment at very near the time when his connection with the church he served was voluntarily broken off: —

"We love the venerable house
Our fathers built to God;
In heaven are kept their grateful vows,
Their dust endears the sod.

"Here holy thoughts a light have shed
From many a radiant face,
And prayers of tender hope have spread
A perfume through the place.

"And anxious hearts have pondered here
The mystery of life,
And prayed the Eternal Spirit clear
Their doubts and end their strife.

"From humble tenements around
Came up the pensive train,
And in the church a blessing found,
Which filled their homes again.

"For faith and peace and mighty love,
That from the Godhead flow,
Showed them the life of heaven above
Springs from the life below.

"They live with God, their homes are dust;
But here their children pray,
And in this fleeting lifetime trust
To find the narrow way."

So far as printed memorials can aid us, Emerson's progress in his chosen direction seems not so much a growth as a leap. The publication of the little volume called "Nature" lifted the heretic Unitarian parson into a leader of a new school of thought, and New England transcendentalism dates its existence from that charming and suggestive book. Its circulation was limited; the author's share of the profits of its sale could hardly have paid his tailor's bill for three months; but it was studied as a kind of new gospel by a number of enthusiastic young students in our colleges, and its influence was ludicrously disproportioned to its circulation. At the time of its publication, it was impossible to meet educated men and women in any social circle in Boston without hearing "Nature" discussed, — the elderly scholars assailing and the younger defending it; but still some four or five hundred copies of the book itself supplied the public demand. What is called "the popular mind" was not then, and has not since, been much affected by the volumes in which Emerson condensed his original thinking into the smallest possible compass; but dilu-

tions of Emerson have made reputations by the score. His sentences have furnished texts for sermons; his paragraphs have been expanded into volumes; and open minds, representing every variety of creed, have gladly appropriated and worked out, after their own fashion, hints and impulses derived from this creedless seer and thinker. His comprehensiveness is shown by the fact that those timid readers who have an instinctive repugnance to the general drift of his teaching are still surprised by finding something in him which meets their immediate spiritual need; and gratefully taking that, they leave the heretical matter to such spirits as find inspiration and nutriment in it. It may be said that while fragments of Emerson reappear in almost all phases of modern thinking, he has left behind him no Emersonian.

In considering Emerson as a poet writing in verse, the objection comes at once that his greatest poetic achievements have been in prose. The question is asked, Can you name one of his essays in which the poetic sentiment and faculty do not predominate? While his command of verse was limited to a few metres, do you not feel that when the fetters of rhyme are removed from the expression of his thought and feeling, the rhythm of some of his prose sentences is more essentially melodious than the best of his short, flashing, seven-syllabled couplets? Emerson himself, with a secret liking for verse and an aching desire to master its difficulties, once declared to a friend that the question whether his power lay in prose or verse

was referred to Carlyle and John Stuart Mill, and they decided at once for prose. If Tyndall, an ardent admirer of Emerson's poetry, had been selected instead of Mill, probably no decision would have been rendered, for the judges would have disagreed.

Perhaps it may be asserted that the finest, loftiest, and deepest thoughts of Emerson, being poetic in essence, would naturally have found vent in some of the forms of poetic expression, for they announce spiritual facts and principles, vividly and warmly perceived, which are commonly not content with being stated, but carry with them an impulse and demand to be sung or chanted. If his piercing insight had been accompanied by a sensibility corresponding to it, he would have given us more poems and fewer essays; but there was a certain rigidity in his nature which could be made to melt and flow only when it was subjected to intense heat. Some persons were inclined to confound this rigidity with frigidity of character, and called him cold; but the difference was as great as that between iron and ice. The fire in him, which would instantly have dissipated ice into vapor, made the iron in him run molten and white-hot into the mould of his thought when he was stirred by a great sentiment or an inspiring insight. It is admitted that he is worthy to rank among the great masters of expression; yet he was the least fluent of educated human beings. In a company of swift talkers he seemed utterly helpless, until he fixed upon the right word or phrase to embody his meaning; and

then the word or phrase was like a gold coin, fresh and bright from the mint, and recognized as worth ten times as much as the small change of conversation which had been circulating so rapidly around the table while he was mute or stammering. That wonderful compactness and condensation of statement which surprise and charm the readers of his books were due to the fact that he exerted every faculty of his mind in the act of verbal expression. A prodigal in respect to thoughts, he was still the most austere economist in the use of words. We detect this quality in his poetry as in his prose; but in his poetry it is found to be compatible with the lyric rush, the unwithholding self-abandonment to the inspiration of the Muse, which commonly characterizes poets who in their enthusiasm have lost their self-possession and self-command.

In writing of poetry, Emerson admitted that his ideal poet never had an actual existence. The greatest poets of the world only suggested, here and there, the possible "Olympian bard" who would "sing divine ideas" on earth without any break in the continuity of his inspiration. His character would ever be on a level with his loftiest thought and aspiration, and "so to be" would be the sole inlet of "so to know." The secret of the universe such a bard would melodiously reveal; but actual poets had only caught glimpses of it in certain happy moments, when with "a shudder of joy" they discerned the Real shining through the mask of the Apparent. The mask was

visible Nature; the real was the soul within and behind it.

In regard to this all-animating soul, the idealism of Emerson varied with his moods. There are numerous passages in his works which with a simple change of terms would make his doctrine of the "Over-Soul" agree with the orthodoxy of Jonathan Edwards. Substitute "Holy Spirit" for "Over-Soul" in his affirmation of the communion of the divine with the human mind, and the heretic becomes almost a Calvinist. "When," Emerson says, "this soul breathes through the intellect of man, it is genius; when it breathes through his will, it is virtue; when it flows through his affection, it is love." The impotence of man when deprived of this divine inspiration and support has hardly ever been more strongly stated than in some of Emerson's sentences and couplets. "The blindness of the intellect begins when it would be something of itself. The weakness of the will begins when the individual would be something of himself. All reform aims, in some one particular, to let the soul have its way through us; in other words, to engage us to obey." It is needless to multiply quotations in which Emerson affirms that what is done by man is as nothing when compared with what is done through him.

This seeming conformity to the Westminster Catechism is, however, soon found to be only a part of a scheme of thought which includes some heresies. Emerson's leading idea was that the whole universe

of thought and things was a complex manifestation of a Central Unity; that "the All" was a manifestation of "the One;" that the universal mind was in the minutest atom of nebulous mist as in the brain of Plato or Newton; and that man in his highest perceptions of Nature not only communed with the soul animating the visible universe, but saw and felt that his individual soul was identical with it; for he says: "The world is mind precipitated, and the volatile essence is ever escaping again into the state of free thought. Hence the virtue and pungency of the influence on the mind of natural objects, whether inorganic or organic. Man imprisoned, man crystallized, man vegetative, speaks to man impersonated." In the heat of developing this thought, Emerson seems at times to be a pantheist, representing the universal mind as impersonal, though coming now and then to self-consciousness in certain great individuals elected or selected to be its organs, — these men, however, being but waves in the great sea of existence, elevated above other men for the moment by some wind of inspiration sweeping over its surface, but subsiding quickly to the ordinary level of the infinite ocean of being of which they form an inconsiderable portion. They emerge only to be submerged. But his opinions on this question vary with the variations in his mental and moral experience of life, and in one essay he seems to deny what he may vehemently affirm in the next. It is hopeless to search his writings for any consistent theory of deism

or pantheism. Still, one thing is certain, that the deity he adores, whether an Infinite Person or an Infinite It, is "immanent" in the universe of matter and mind, and stamps it with the impress of unity. In the little poem called "Blight," he complains that too many modern scientists have lost the sense that Nature is alive with spirit. They look only at the surfaces of things; and in this respect he contrasts them unfavorably with the old astrologers and alchemists, who at least preferred things to names:

> "For these were men,
> Were unitarians of the united world;
> And wheresoever their clear eyebeams fell
> They caught the footsteps of the SAME."

And in "Xenophanes" he declares: —

> "All things
> Are of one pattern made; bird, beast, and flower,
> Song, picture, form, space, thought, and character
> Deceive us, seeming to be many things,
> And are but one. Beheld far off, they part
> As God and devil; bring them to the mind,
> They dull its edge with their monotony.
> To know one element, explore another,
> And in the second reappears the first.
> The spacious panorama of a year
> But multiplies the image of a day, —
> A bell of mirrors round a taper's flame;
> And universal Nature, through her vast
> And crowded whole, an infinite paroquet,
> Repeats one note."

In "Wood-Notes" we see Emerson in his most rapturous mood. There is inspiration in every line.

In direct contact with Nature he throws off every shackle of conventionality, and sings as though he were the first and only man, — the Adam, born with the birth of created things, and gladly and exultingly witnessing and welcoming the creation whose secret purpose and plan he discerns.

"All the forms are fugitive,
But the substances survive.
Ever fresh the broad creation,
A divine improvisation,
From the heart of God proceeds, —
A single will, a million deeds.
Once slept the world an egg of stone,
And pulse and sound and light was none;
And God said 'Throb!' and there was motion,
And the vast mass became vast ocean.
Onward and on, the eternal Pan,
Who layeth the world's incessant plan,
Halteth never in one shape,
But forever doth escape,
Like wave or flame, into new forms
Of gem and air, of plants and worms.
. . . . . .
The world is the ring of his spells
And the play of his miracles.
As he giveth to all to drink,
Thus and thus they are and think.
He giveth little or giveth much,
To make them several or such.
With one drop sheds form and feature;
With the second a special nature;
The third adds heat's indulgent spark;
The fourth gives light which eats the dark;
Into the fifth himself he flings,
And Conscious Law is King of Kings."

Could a pantheist have defined the Universal Being as "*Conscious* Law"? Has any believer in the personality of God ever hit upon a better definition?

Emerson, in an essay on art, declares that the artist must "disindividualize" himself, and become an organ through which the universal mind acts. "There is," he says, "but one reason. The mind that made the world is not one mind, but *the* mind. Every man is an inlet to the same, and to all of the same." The delight we take in a work of art "seems to arise from our recognizing in it the mind that formed Nature again in active operation. . . . A masterpiece of art has in the mind a fixed place in the chain of being, as much as a plant or a crystal." In "The Problem," the best known of all his poems, this thought is developed with wonderful power and beauty. The founders of religions, the great poets and artists, all men who have done things which are universally admitted to be great and admirable, were "disindividualized," — the recipients of an inspiration from the "vast soul that o'er them planned," and in all their works "building better than they knew." It is needless to quote passages from this poem, because so many thousands of cultivated people know it by heart. But why is it called "The Problem"? The answer must be sought in the verses with which it begins and closes. Like all poets and philosophers who are classed as pantheists, Emerson had a pronounced, almost a haughty individuality. Throughout his life he guarded this with a jealous care. He never could

endure the thought of being the organ of any fraternity, the disciple of any master, the representative of any organization, the spokesman of any body of reformers, however noble might be their objects. His essays swarm with criticisms on the one-sideness of every philanthropic association of his time; and it may be said, as an illustration of the general impression regarding the purity, integrity, strength, and sweetness of his character, that he was the only man in New England who could criticise the "reformers" without becoming the object of their invective. It was impossible for Emerson to part with his own individuality, even in celebrating the achievements of the inspired saints, bards, and artists who had seemingly parted with theirs. He did not desire to "disindividualize" himself, while intensely appreciating other individualities. "I like," he says, —

> "I like a church ; I like a cowl ;
> I love a prophet of the soul ;
> And on my heart monastic aisles
> Fall like sweet strains or pensive smiles;
> Yet not for all his faith can see
> Would I that cowlèd Churchman be."

Then burst forth the magnificent lines which seem to destroy the individual in the act of exalting him as the selected instrument of a power higher than himself; and yet the conclusion agrees with the beginning. After all, it must still, he thinks, be said that there is something which distinguishes the person who receives the celestial impulse and aid from all other persons: —

"I know what say the fathers wise, —
The book itself before me lies :
Old *Chrysostom*, best Augustine,
And he who blent both in his line,
The younger *Golden Lips* or mines,
Taylor, the Shakspeare of divines.
His words are music to my ear,
I see his cowlèd portrait dear ;
And yet for all his faith could see,
I would not the good bishop be."

All this practically means: "I would not be otherwise than what I am, Ralph Waldo Emerson."

Indeed, however much Emerson may vary in his statements, — at one time placing the emphasis on the universal mind, and at another on the individual mind, — the general drift of his writings goes to show that the purpose of the spirit which underlies "Nature" is to build up intrepid manhood in human nature. In "Monadnoc" the poet professes to be at first disgusted with the clowns and churls who have built their habitations on the slopes of the mountain ; but he finds consolation in the thought that they are the progenitors of a finer race to come: —

"The World-soul knows his own affair,
Forelooking when he would prepare,
For the next ages, men of mould
Well embodied, well ensouled ;
He cools the present's fiery glow,
Sets the life-pulse strong but slow :
Bitter winds and fasts austere
His quarantines and grottos, where
He slowly cures decrepit flesh,
And brings it infantile and fresh.

These exercises are the toys
And games to breathe his stalwart boys:
They bide their time, and well can prove,
If need were, their line from Jove;
Of the same stuff, and so allayed,
As that whereof the sun is made,
And of the fibre, quick and strong,
Whose throbs are love, whose thrills are song."

But what is the mental mood in which the human mind, lifted above its ordinary limitations, sees into the heart of Nature? Emerson affirms it to be the mood of ecstasy, — a kind of celestial intoxication, which, while it may blind the eye of the soul to the clear perception of things as they appear, sharpens and brightens its perception of things as they really are. In "Bacchus" we have both a statement and example of this inspiration. "Bring me," he exclaims, —

"Bring me wine, but wine which never grew
In the belly of the grape,
Or grew on vine whose tap-roots, reaching through
Under the Andes to the Cape,
Suffered no savor of the earth to 'scape.

. . . . . .

We buy ashes for bread;
We buy diluted wine;
Give me of the true,
Whose ample leaves and tendrils curled
Among the silver hills of heaven
Draw everlasting dew;
Wine of wine,
Blood of the world,
Form of forms, and mould of statures,
That I intoxicated,

And by the draught assimilated,
May float at pleasure through all natures;
The bird language rightly spell,
And that which roses say so well:

"Wine that is shed
Like the torrents of the sun
Up the horizon walls,
Or like the Atlantic streams which run
When the South Sea calls:

"Water and bread,
Food which needs no transmuting,
Rainbow-flowering, wisdom-fruiting,
Wine which is already man,
Food which teach and reason can:

"Wine which Music is, —
Music and wine are one, —
That I, drinking this,
Shall hear far Chaos talk with me;
Kings unborn shall walk with me;
And the poor grass shall plot and plan
What it will do when it is man.
Quickened so, will I unlock
Every crypt of every rock.

"I thank the joyful juice
For all I know;
Winds of remembering
Of the ancient being blow,
And seeming-solid walls of use
Open and flow.

"Pour, Bacchus! the remembering wine;
Retrieve the loss of me and mine!
Vine for vine be antidote,
And the grape requite the lote!
Haste to cure the old despair, —

Reason in Nature's lotus drenched,
The memory of ages quenched;
Give them again to shine;
Let wine repair what this undid;
And where the infection slid,
A dazzling memory revive;
Refresh the faded tints,
Recut the aged prints,
And write my old adventures with the pen
Which on the first day drew,
Upon the tablets blue,
The dancing Pleiads and eternal men."

In this poem, published long before the "Origin of Species" appeared, we have a theory of development and evolution more far-reaching than Darwin's; and Emerson anticipates even the doctrine of natural selection in some of his other poems. Thus, for instance, in "The World-Soul," he says that Destiny —

"The patient Dæmon sits,
With roses and a shroud;
He has his way and deals his gifts, —
But ours are not allowed.

. . . . .

He serveth the servant,
The brave he loves amain;
He kills the cripple and the sick,
And straight begins again.
For gods delight in gods,
And thrust the weak aside;
To him who scorns their charities,
Their arms fly open wide."

And again, in the "Ode to W. H. Channing," we have this declaration: —

"The over-god
Who marries Right to Might,
Who peoples, unpeoples,—
He who exterminates
Races by stronger races,
Black by white faces,—
Knows how to bring honey
Out of the lion;
Grafts gentlest scion
On pirate and Turk."

The general idea of the "survival of the fittest" reappears often in Emerson's writings. To benevolent men it seems the scientific form of the theological doctrine of "election;" but Emerson considered it in connection with his theory that what we call evil is a roundabout way of producing good. The spiritual laws which regulate the universe cannot be overturned by powerful individuals, for it is notorious that what they desire to do in violation of these outlying laws meets with such resistance that the effect produced is very different from the effect intended. Evil is good in the making,—not a positive substance, but a mere imperfection of good. "The sharpest evils are bent into that periodicity which makes the errors of planets and the fevers and distempers of men self-limiting. . . . Good is a good doctor, but Bad is sometimes a better. . . . If one shall read the future of the race hinted in the organic effort of Nature to mount and meliorate, and the corresponding impulse to the Better in the human being, we shall dare affirm that there is nothing he will not overcome and convert, until at last culture shall absorb the chaos and gehenna. He

will convert the Furies into Muses, and the hells into benefit."

It is in view of such sentences as these that we must consider a few of Emerson's poems in which his theory of evil is somewhat too bluntly expressed. Such is "Uriel," which has troubled many of Emerson's admirers who were attracted to him because of the emphasis he laid on the moral sentiment. It was the very intensity of his conception of the universal dominion of this sentiment which made him deride all efforts to resist it.

Leaving out of view, however, Emerson's poetic philosophy of Nature and man, and the poems which specially represent it, he is still the author of some short pieces which are at once admirable and popular. Such are "Each and All," "The Rhodora," "The Snow-storm," "The Humble-bee," and "Forerunners," each of which justifies the dictum of their author, that "Beauty is its own excuse for being." In "Forerunners" the poet tells us of his joyous and resolute pursuit of unattainable beauty. The pursuit of his "happy guides" results in disappointment: —

> "For no speed of mine avails
> To hunt upon their shining trails;"

yet, though never overtaken, he feels they are never far distant: —

> "Their near camp my spirit knows
> By signs gracious as rainbows.
> I thenceforward, and long after,
> Listen for their harp-like laughter,
> And carry in my heart for days
> Peace that hallows rudest ways."

It is a marked distinction of this little poem, — one of the most exquisite in the language, — that it testifies to the possibility of finding a certain content in following continually an ideal never reached. Most poets eloquently celebrate their discontent when they learn that the earth they inhabit is different from the heaven they conceive. Byron is specially enraged at what he considers this injustice of Providence.

Emerson's philosophy in this matter was not due to a dull perception of beauty in any of its forms. No poet was more keenly susceptible to it; no poet ever shrank from deformity with such an instinctive repulsion; and moral ugliness specially irritated him, not only because it was wicked, but because it was "disagreeable." Goethe's masterpiece, "Faust," "abounded," he once wrote, "in the disagreeable. The vice is prurient, learned, Parisian. In the presence of Jove, Priapus may be allowed as an offset, but here he is an equal hero. The book is undoubtedly written by a master, and stands unhappily related to the whole modern world; but it is a very disagreeable chapter of literature, and accuses the author as well as the times. Shakspeare could, no doubt, have been disagreeable had he had less genius, and if ugliness had attracted him. In short, our English nature and genius have made us the worst critics of Goethe."

Indeed, Emerson felt in this matter like his own humble-bee, in his avoidance of "aught unsavory or unclean." And his "Ode to Beauty" indicates that the sense of beauty penetrated to the inmost centre

of his being, and was an indissoluble element in his character: —

"Who gave thee, O Beauty,
The keys of this breast, —
Too credulous lover
Of blest and unblest, —
Say, when in lapsed ages
Thee knew I of old?
Or what was the service
For which I was sold?
I found me thy thrall
By magical drawings,
Sweet tyrant of all!

. . . . .

Lavish, lavish promiser,
Nigh persuading gods to err!
Guest of million painted forms,
Which in turn thy glory warms!
The frailest leaf, the mossy bark,
The acorn's cup, the rain-drop's arc,
The swinging spider's silver line,
The ruby of the drop of wine,
The shining pebble of the pond,
Thou inscribest with a bond,
In thy momentary play,
Would bankrupt nature to repay.

. . . . . .

Thee, gliding through the sea of form,
Like the lightning through the storm,
Somewhat not to be possessed,
Somewhat not to be caressed,
No feet so fleet could ever find,
No perfect form could ever bind.

. . . . . .

The leafy dell, the city mart,
Equal trophies of thine art;
E'en the flowing azure air
Thou hast touched for my despair;

And if I languish into dreams,
Again I meet the ardent beams.
Queen of things! I dare not die
In Being's deeps past ear and eye;
Lest there I find the same deceiver,
And be the sport of Fate forever.
Dread Power, but dear! if God thou be,
Unmake me quite, or give thyself to me!"

Emerson once, in speaking to a friend, remarked that he could write in prose by spurring his faculties into action; but he could write in verse only in certain happy moments of inspiration, for which he had to wait. In our limited space it is impossible to do more than to quote a few verses in which this inspiration is recorded. Here are specimens from "Wood-Notes:" —

"For Nature beats in perfect tune,
And rounds with rhyme her every rune,
Whether she work in land or sea,
Or hide underground her alchemy.
Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,
Or dip thy paddle in the lake,
But it carves the bow of beauty there,
And the ripples in rhyme the oar forsake.
. . . . .
Who liveth by the ragged pine
Foundeth a heroic line;
Who liveth in a palace hall
Waneth fast and spendeth all.
. . . . .
The rough and bearded forester
Is better than the lord;
God fills the scrip and canister,
Sin piles the loaded board.
. . . . .

Go where he will, the wise man is at home,
His hearth the earth, — his hall the azure dome.

. . . . . .

He saw beneath dim aisles, in odorous beds,
The slight Linnæa hang its twin-born heads,
And blessed the monument of the man of flowers,
Which breathes his sweet fame through the northern bowers.

. . . . . .

Lover of all things alive,
Wonderer at all he meets,
Wonderer chiefly at himself, —
Who can tell him what he is?
Or how meet in human elf
Coming and past eternities?"

From his poems under the title of "Initial, Dæmonic, and Celestial Love," lines without number might be cited in proof that he had studied this passion scientifically. His report on its various manifestations has the exactness of the scientist combined with the glow of the poet. His Cupid is represented as especially dangerous through his eyes: —

"In the pit of his eye 's a spark
Would bring back day if it were dark.

. . . . . .

He lives in his eyes;
There doth digest, and work and spin,
And buy and sell, and lose and win;
He rolls them with delighted motion,
Joy-tides swell their mimic ocean.
Yet holds he them with taughtest rein,
That they may seize and entertain
The glance that to their glance opposes,
Like fiery honey sucked from roses.

. . . . . .

Deep, deep are loving eyes,
Flowed with naphtha fiery sweet;
And the point is paradise
Where their glances meet."

Emerson has two poems, "Dirge" and "Threnody," which stand for examples of what may be called intellectualized pathos. The grief does not burst forth with passionate directness from the heart, but is passed through the intellect and imagination before it is allowed expression in words. Tennyson's "In Memoriam" is the most striking illustration in English literature of this process of restraining emotion in order to make its finer effects on character permanent. The poet lays particular emphasis on the office of imagination in softening and consecrating the grief which it at the same time makes enduring: —

"Likewise the imaginative woe,
That loved to handle spiritual strife,
Diffused the shock through all my life,
But in the present broke the blow."

In Emerson's "Dirge" this spiritualized sadness is exquisitely expressed. His dead brothers are still kept sacredly near to his soul, for they are lodged in the memory of his realizing imagination, and no lapse of years can make the sense of his loss of "the strong, star-bright companions" of his childhood and youth a calamity to fade into forgetfulness. In essential pathos, what can exceed the sorrow expressed in this stanza of the poem: —

"I touch this flower of silken leaf,
Which once our childhood knew,
Its soft leaves wound me with a grief
Whose balsam never grew."

The "Threnody" on the loss of his child —

"The hyacinthine boy, for whom
Morn well might break and April bloom;
The gracious boy, who did adorn
The world whereinto he was born" —

has more of the character of an outburst of the heart under the agonizing feeling of an irreparable calamity, but its pathos is still of the kind which lies "too deep for tears." Indeed, the solid manhood of the father, rooted in ideas, and strong to resist the "blasphemy of grief," was never better exemplified than in this tender and beautiful "Threnody." The father has now followed the child. Is it irreverent to suggest that the anticipation in the line which concludes the poem he has now verified, —

"Lost in God, in Godhead found."

There are stanzas in Emerson's poems which read like oracles. Their truth to our moral being is so close that we should hardly be surprised if they were prefaced with a "Thus saith the Lord." And, indeed, Emerson announces them with the confident tone of the seer and the prophet. They rank with the loftiest utterances which have ever proceeded from the awakened heart and conscience and intellect of man.

The Concord Fourth of July "Ode" (1857), which opens with the magnificent imagination, —

> "Oh, tenderly the haughty Day
> Fills his blue urn with fire,"

closes with the inspiring declaration that

> "He that worketh high and wise,
> Nor pauses in his plan,
> Will take the sun out of the skies
> Ere freedom out of man."

The short poem called "Freedom" ends with these soul-animating lines: —

> "Freedom's secret wilt thou know?
> Counsel not with flesh and blood;
> Loiter not for cloak or food;
> Right thou feelest, rush to do."

The "Boston Hymn" (1863), which begins with "the Word of the Lord," closes with an impressive verse in which is condensed the whole divine law of retribution. What poet before Emerson ever gave eyes to the thunderbolt?

> "My will fulfilled shall be,
> For, in daylight as in dark,
> My thunderbolt has eyes to see
> His way home to the mark."

In the "Voluntaries," which are infused throughout with the heroic feelings roused by the Civil War, there is one quatrain that stands out from the rest with startling distinctness and power: —

"So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man,
When Duty whispers low, *Thou must*,
The youth replies, *I can*."

But perhaps the noblest of these affirmations of the absolute obligation of men to follow their consciences, rather than what appears to be their interests, is contained in four lines with the heading of "Sacrifice." This quatrain is a poem in itself, — an epic poem:

"Though love repine, and reason chafe,
There comes a voice without reply, —
'T is man's perdition to be safe,
When for the truth he ought to die."

The reason that such grand utterances as these thrill us with unwonted emotion is to be found in our instinctive belief that the poet's character was on a level with his lofty thinking. He affirmed the supremacy of spiritual laws because he spoke from a height of spiritual experience to which he had mounted by the steps of spiritual growth. In reading him we feel that we are in communion with an original person as well as with an original poet, — one whose character is as brave as it is sweet, as strong as it is beautiful, as firm and resolute in will as it is keen and delicate in insight, — one who has earned the right authoritatively to announce, without argument, great spiritual facts and principles, because his soul has come into direct contact with them. As a poet he often takes strange liberties with the established laws of rhyme and rhythm; even his images are

occasionally enigmas; but he still contrives to pour through his verse a flood and rush of inspiration not often perceptible in the axiomatic sentences of his most splendid prose. In his verse he gives free, joyous, exulting expression to all the audacities of his thinking and feeling; and perhaps this inadequate attempt to set forth his merits as a poet may be appropriately closed by citing, from the poem which bears the title of "Merlin," his own conception of what a poet should be and should do: —

"Thy trivial harp will never please
Or fill my craving ear;
Its chords should ring as blows the breeze,
Free, peremptory, clear.
No jingling serenader's art,
Nor tinkle of piano strings,
Can make the wild blood start
In its mystic springs.
The kingly bard
Must smite the chords rudely and hard,
As with hammer or with mace;
That they may render back
Artful thunder, which conveys
Secrets of the solar track,
Sparks of the supersolar blaze.
Merlin's blows are strokes of fate,
Chiming with the forest tone,
When boughs buffet boughs in the wood;
Chiming with the gasp and moan
Of the ice-imprisoned flood;
With the pulse of manly hearts,
With the voice of orators,
With the din of city arts,
With the cannonade of wars,
With the marches of the brave,
And prayers of might from martyr's cave.

"Great is the art,
Great be the manners, of the bard.
He shall not his brain encumber
With the coil of rhythm and number;
But leaving rule and pale forethought,
He shall aye climb
For his rhyme.
'Pass in, pass in,' the angels say,
'In to the upper doors,
Nor count compartments of the floors,
But mount to Paradise
By the stairway of surprise.'"

THE CHARACTER AND GENIUS OF THOMAS STARR KING.

THE success of the two volumes — one of Sermons, the other of Lectures — of Thomas Starr King indicates that he still lives, though the brave, bright, cordial, and ardent spirit has gone to another sphere of existence. Wherever he exists, we may be sure that he is at work, though at work under the conditions of that celestial activity which is perfectly compatible with a true Christian's idea of rest and repose, — the rest which is simply a more genial exercise of powers which were resolutely employed on earth in the service of God; and the repose which he more or less felt, while dwelling here, in the conception of those universal sentiments and ideas which have the magical effect both to inspire and calm. Of few men could it be said with more truth than of him: "His body is at rest, his soul in heaven."

The press of the country has been singularly unanimous in recognizing the merits of King as a man and as a preacher. It however seems to me that a sufficient stress has not been laid on King's perfect faith that Life — spiritual life — is essentially continuous, and that the tomb is merely the robing-room whence

the individual spirit enters into its new life, under new conditions. This is the real question of the time, Do we live after we die? King answers it with an emphatic and cheerful "Yes," as if there could be no doubt of it. Every sermon in his volume is a confident affirmation of this inherent, though sometimes partially obscured, belief of humanity. He almost takes it for granted in the sermons in which he insists on the necessary continuity of life. He leans over the grave in which a husband or a wife, a father or a mother, a son or a daughter, is laid; and he says: "Be of good cheer! the person you mourn and whom you loved is not in this coffin, but has ascended. Our earthly sorrow should be mingled with a sacred joy. Individual life is indestructible; there is no grave for *that*. Let us cry 'Glory to God!' in presence of this seeming eclipse of life, — only an eclipse, not an extinction."

This feeling of King was both a faith and an experience. Everybody who knew him must have been impressed with the calm way in which he spoke to his friends of this fundamental fact in his conception of life, — namely, its everlastingness. "I am here in Boston to-day; to-morrow I am in San Francisco. Whether I write to you or not, I am still in spiritual relations with you. It is foolish to suppose that if I happen to die in San Francisco, I shall be less near to my friends than if I wrote to them by every post. What I am in myself is just as real when I am laid in what is called the grave as in my most familiar

intercourse with you. For God's sake, do not be deceived by this fiction of physical death, as if *that* could separate *me* from *you!*" King's reliance on the immortality of the individual mind was stronger than any capitalist can possibly feel in his solidest investments; and he always spoke of it with the confidence that other men speak of their personal estate. *His* personal estate was invested in Thomas Starr King; and he fastened upon it as an eternal possession, — as something which was to endure forever.

It was this faith that gave him such power in meeting the ghastliest facts of our earthly life. There was no calamity which he could not confront, both by reason and spiritual insight, with the comforting assurance, "Be of good cheer!" Life bounded so abundantly, so impetuously, so joyously, in all the veins of his spiritual frame, that he was perhaps not sufficiently respectful to "Death, the Skeleton." The dread phantom excited in him neither horror nor repugnance. He was ready to welcome it, in the natural course of things, as something to be met and overcome; but he stoutly insisted that it was but a phantom, — an appearance, — with no reality in it as looked at from the point of view of infinite life. There is, he seemed to say, —

> "There is no speculation in those eyes
> Which thou dost glare with!"

Now, I have read a vast quantity of sermons by men of deeply religious minds; but it is only in the

sermons of men of religious genius that I have noticed anything which equalled King's cheerful and cheering trust in the continuousness of life, after death has seemingly extinguished it. His sermons, it seems to me, entitle him to rank with men of religious genius; for they really assist human beings to meet the most awful of human experiences, by communicating to them the consolation, the hope, the cheer which they need in the hour of their own departure, or — what is practically of more importance — in the departure of those they love. There are five or six sermons in the volume, relating to death in every form in which it can afflict, affright, or uplift the soul, which seem to me penetrated with the essential, the inmost spirit of Christianity. On his own death-bed King murmured, "I see a great future before me!" The spirit that uttered those words is all alive in the sermons, preached when he was in vigorous health, and when "a great future" was before him in doing the work of God on earth.

The sermons also are distinguished by the admirable way in which the precepts which regulate the proper conduct of life are strenuously enforced. Precepts! — I should rather say Forces. There is not a moral principle stated in the whole volume which is not thoroughly vitalized, which is not made lovable, which is not converted from a mere recommendation to do well into an impulse to do well. The book not only communicates moral knowledge but moral *life*. It is full, not only of spiritual nourishment and re-

freshment, but of spiritual stimulant and force; and while it clearly points out the way to salvation, and gives impetus to the pilgrim who has bravely ventured on the right path, it invigorates him, as he halts exhausted on his journey, with spiritual food.

A book with these precious virtues in it would hardly need, it would seem, any abatement in the cordial praise it should receive. That abatement, however, has been insinuated by some ministers of the Unitarian denomination, — a denomination to which Mr. King belonged, and for which he labored with a zeal exceeding theirs. He is dead, — dead by overexertion in the cause of what is called Liberal Christianity, and by unwithholding devotion to the cause of the country in its deadly grapple with a rebellion based, in his own words, "on perjury, treason, and insult to toil;" but his superciliously "liberal" critics are alive, and yawning over what they call Christian commonplaces, and desiring the sting of some *un*-Christian paradoxes to rouse them from their state of theological boredom, they complacently suggest that though King was a good, bright, generous fellow, full of the love of God and the love of man, and though he sacrificed his life in his self-abandonment to both of these requisites of the Christian martyr, he still is not up to the advanced theological thought of the age. They praise his virtues as a man, while insulting him as a thinker and theologian.

Now, everybody who knew King is aware how thoroughly he studied the works of the great German

rationalists, and how thoroughly he placed himself on a level with the most advanced preachers of the Unitarian faith, in discarding everything he thought false in the accredited opinions of a large majority of the members of the denomination to which he belonged. But his intellectual audacity was modified by an admirable moral discretion; and he did not think it a mark of a progressive mind to adopt a sceptical speculation, merely because it shocked a popular belief. He believed in the Unitarian *faith*, — faith in God, faith in man, faith in the possibility of a communion of the Divine with the human soul; and while he was well acquainted with the facts and reasonings of the radical Unitarians, while he never hesitated to declare that the accepted interpretation of many texts of Scripture falsified their spirit, while he discarded every theory on which the doctrine of a plenary inspiration of the Scriptures was founded, he still was firm in the faith that God was present in our Christian Bible in a sense widely different from that in which He was supposed to have inspired the Vedas and the Koran, — in a sense widely different from the spirit which inspired the "Divine Comedy" of Dante and the "Paradise Lost" of Milton. But his essential difference with the vigorous thinkers and scholars — who, after protesting themselves out of Orthodoxy into Unitarianism, have protested themselves out of Unitarianism into Naturalism — was his denial of the idea that God retreats as science advances, that the limitations of the human mind are such as to make

the knowledge of the Infinite impossible. From his own spiritual experience, as well as from his study of the phenomena recorded in the lives of religious thinkers, saints, and martyrs, — that is, of men of religious genius, — he believed that God might be intimately near to the human soul, while infinitely distant from the human understanding. Communion with the Divine Mind he considered to be the inmost essence of religion; and spiritual help from above, derived from this communion, he deemed the solid prop both of religion and morality. He would have cast off the preacher's gown in disgust, and gone into some other profession, had he not been vitally convinced of the truth of these two propositions; and his conviction of their truth naturally allied him to all men of religious perception and religious genius, no matter what might be the church or denomination to which they nominally belonged. He was, in the intensest meaning of the phrase, an evangelical "liberal" Christian.

The Unitarian denomination is one for which I have a great respect, not merely because I am proud to belong to it, but because it has produced some admirable specimens of human character. But it necessarily subordinates, as a general rule, the emotional to the intellectual elements of religion; it is the most protestant of all protestants; it is forced, by its position among the sects, to deny rather than affirm; and the consequence is, that some persons of an aggressive temper are attracted to its churches, who, while they

have no richness of religious experience, glory in a great abundance of litigious animosity to orthodox opinions. If there can be anything more hateful than the stupidest forms of superstitious bigotry, it is the intolerance of the heterodox bigot, who makes intellectual assent to certain negations the test of religious character. An illiberal "liberal" Christian is one of the most exasperating of all fanatics; for his fanaticism is based on what he calls his reason, and he ignores every fact of deep religious experience.

It is also to be said against the Unitarians, as a body, that they are commonly scandalously indifferent to the works produced by their most eminent representatives in the theological world. For example, one of the most profound books that have lately appeared from the American press is Dr. Hedge's "Ways of the Spirit;" and yet in my intercourse with intelligent Unitarian laymen I have hardly found one who has heard that the book has even been published. Here is a man, generally admitted to be one of the foremost minds in the Unitarian body, — a man who has condensed the results of a long life of study and thought into a series of essays, recommended by all the charms of a singularly lucid, pointed, and brilliant style; and yet opulent and cultivated Unitarians can confess without shame that they are ignorant of the existence of his book! Were he an Episcopalian, or a Presbyterian, or a Baptist, or a learned doctor of divinity of any Orthodox persuasion, there would be such a flourish of

trumpets that the din would force all men and women of his general way of thinking to rush to the book-shops, in order to obtain the precious volume; but he is a Unitarian; and Unitarians seem to take it for granted that their great men should produce valuable works, and they trust that these works will have a good effect in liberalizing persons outside of the denomination. As for themselves, *they* are too far advanced to need any instruction. King's volume of sermons has met with a wider recognition; but still the most cordial notices it has received are, on the whole, from the organs of Orthodoxy; and certainly its large sale has been rather among the readers of the "Independent," the "Christian Union," "Zion's Herald," and the "Congregationalist" than among the readers of the "Christian Register" and the "Unitarian Review." The Unitarians ought to be stung, by the sharpest implements which scorn and sarcasm can afford, into recognizing the fact that they have among their number some of the greatest poets, some of the profoundest theologians, some of the deepest thinkers of the country.

King, I think, is a test case of the comparative indifference of the polite and polished Unitarian body of Christians to one of their most noted products. When I hear a Unitarian clergyman superciliously remark of his sermons, that "they are good — very good; but then, you know, we are sixteen years ahead of his teaching!" I lose all my small stock of patience. The Unitarian denomination, during its exist-

ence in this country, has produced many scholars, thinkers, and men of spiritual insight; but among all the men distinguished by scholarship, thought, and spiritual discernment it has produced very few men like Thomas Starr King, who, uniting these various qualities, was also a hero and a martyr. He lived the grand principles of humanity and Christianity which he expounded from the pulpit and the platform. Channing was as noble a moralist, and had perhaps a deeper spiritual insight; but Channing was an invalid; and it was often in a sick-chamber, with long pauses between the paragraphs, he wrote down the carefully elaborated thoughts which have moved and elevated the public mind. King was a man who went into the world, faced all the hardships of existence, endured every kind of vexation with a manly fortitude, and was ever ready to peril his life for any cause he espoused. In California, especially, he perfectly understood that his labors for his church and his country must kill him; that he was overtasking his strength; that he was letting his blood out drop by drop, as day by day he toiled in obedience to the incessant, the imperative demands of religious and political duty. He never faltered in his labors, though he was aware that he awoke every morning a weaker man physically than he was the day before; that he was dying hour by hour, through that slow suicide of overwork which is the noblest and holiest self-sacrifice that can be made by the martyrs of religion and freedom. This is the spirit that breathes through his

sermons; this gives them their peculiar inspiration; this endows them with the power equally to kindle and console; this penetrates them with that sacred cheer which sustains all souls struggling with calamity, yet victorious over it through trust in God. "But — but — but — he was not as advanced in his thinking, you know, as we other Unitarian clergymen are!"

His lectures are penetrated by the same cordial, humane, and lofty spirit which animates his sermons; though of course the lectures afford freer play to his wit, to his fancy, — in short, to his various talents and accomplishments. Of all the men I ever knew, he was the one man who most rapidly assimilated knowledge, who most quickly converted it into faculty, and who most readily used it for the purposes of the reasoner, the moralist, the Christian, and the poet. Give him at night a new work on mental or physical science, bristling all over with technical terms and abstruse speculations, and in the morning he would lucidly restate its processes and results, so as not only to make them intelligible, but attractive to the average mind. The lectures on "Substance and Show," "The Laws of Disorder," "Sight and Insight," and "Existence and Life" are quite remarkable transformations of the dry but important facts and principles of ethics, metaphysics, and, especially, of physical science, into things "rich and strange." These lectures were delivered to miscellaneous audiences in every part of the country, and were so popular, that to follow King in the order of a Lyceum course was always felt by

other lecturers — no matter how appropriate to the uppermost questions of the day their themes may have been — as a hazardous experiment. Yet King, more than any other lecturer except Mr. Emerson, took for his subjects the great problems of existence, such as had been scientifically treated by Aristotle and Plato, by Descartes and Leibnitz, by Hobbes, Berkeley, Locke, and Hume, by Kant and Fichte, by Mill and Hamilton, by Owen, Agassiz, Tyndall, Huxley, and a host of other scientists belonging to opposing schools of philosophy. The way he devoured their books resembled not so much an intellectual passion as an intellectual greediness. His mind required food as a half-starved man requires bread and meat; and the more he ate, the hungrier he seemed to grow. But was it possible to popularize the knowledge he thus acquired, and induce others to feel the same unappeasable sacred hunger for the food of the soul? Now, the popularizing of any science, ethical, metaphysical, political, or physical, is a difficult task, unless he who attempts it has those qualities and powers which swiftly remove the obstructions which interfere with their reception by the popular mind. There are, for example, two sciences which specially relate to the welfare of men; and they are the most unpopular of all the sciences. Everybody desires to have health and long life; and yet books on physiology — books which unfold the conditions of health and longevity — are little read even by persons who have mastered many languages, or who have resolutely faced the

darkest and most intricate problems of philosophy. Everybody, we may say, desires to acquire wealth; and yet political economy, the science of the production of wealth, is so distasteful to most minds, that persons elected to be legislators can make speeches — can even enact laws — which indicate the densest ignorance of the science of wealth, without being ranked — as they should be — among the degraded and uneducated masses of the people. Therefore the two leading passions of the human mind — the desire to be healthy and to be wealthy — have not power enough to induce even reasonable and educated men to study physiology and political economy. It is for these reasons that I consider King's power of making the demonstrated truths of science so attractive that minds of all degrees of culture gladly received them, as a remarkable gift. He so transmuted, so transfigured the facts and principles of any given science by his humor and imagination, that his audiences listened to him with admiring wonder, — a wonder mixed with a kind of personal affection for the genial speaker, from whose lips poured forth such a tide of novel ideas, sparkling illustrations, and glowing sentiments.

The lecture on Socrates, the longest in the volume, is perhaps the most notable of all, because it actually introduced the great Greek moralist and philosopher to the ordinary inhabitants of our towns and villages as an admirable person, whose acquaintance was well worth cultivating. Socrates was to King as real a man as any friend he met in the streets; and he

made others partake of his joy in knowing such a grand specimen of humanity. Somebody said that Webster owed his impressiveness — perhaps his oppressiveness — to the fact that "he was like other folks, only that there was more of him." King contrived to convince both the Cape Cod fishermen and the Western Hoosiers, who listened to him, that Socrates was in direct relations with them, — was one of "the folks." Hazlitt tells us that rambling one morning with Coleridge by the sea-shore, they met a fisherman, who informed them that the day before a large number of fishermen had risked their own lives in the vain attempt to save a poor boy who was drowned. "I don't know," he said, "why it was they ventured; but, sir, we have a *nature* towards one another." King had, in this sense, "a nature" towards all mankind; and that made him attractive to all classes of men. He domesticated Socrates in Eastern and Western cities and towns, — made him a citizen of each place, — because he had the art to show that Socrates had "a nature" in harmony with the best portion of their natures.

I have no space left to do any justice to the exquisite lecture on "Music;" or to that on "Hildebrand," the greatest of the Popes; or to that on "The Earth and the Mechanic Arts." The reading of the last named is calculated to make every mechanic feel that his occupation has a dignity higher than that of the mere opulent "man of society," and that the noblest aristocracy is the intelligent and in-

ventive aristocracy of labor. The lecture on "Books and Reading" is the most judicious, the most stimulating, the most practical, and the most informing of all the essays on that somewhat worn subject which I have ever read. But perhaps the most kindling of all the lectures in the volume are those which record King's four years' contest with the Secessionists of California. The addresses on "Daniel Webster," and "The Privilege and Duties of Patriotism," as well as certain passages in the college oration on the "Intellectual Duties of Students in their Academic Years," are all ablaze with the spirit which made King such a formidable power in California, when the Unionists were contending with the Secessionists for the possession of the State. These are but two out of scores of patriotic addresses which he delivered in every part of California after the war of the Rebellion broke out. Their effect was great among all classes of the population. They combined compact arguments, shot at the understandings of his auditors, with thrilling appeals to their feelings. The miners were particularly delighted with the racy way in which he stated and refuted opposing arguments. On one occasion, a tall miner on the outskirts of the crowd of hearers exclaimed to his companion, who was of a lower stature: "Stand on your toes, Jim, and get a sight of him. Why, the boy is taking every trick!" Yes, the "boy" was taking every trick; but his life was lost in this process of coming out triumphant at the close of

every game. Talk of heroes and martyrs on the battle-field! — God bless them! — and especially God bless them, when we think that the passage of a few years seems to have obliterated from the popular mind any memory of their services and sacrifices; but among the heroes and martyrs of the war I must class King, who, without ever confronting any Confederate with a musket on his shoulder, bravely grappled with the intellectual soldiery of disunion, and routed and overwhelmed them in one of their chosen centres of revolt. As a common soldier, a single bullet might have ended his life and his work; as a soldier of the pulpit and the platform and the "stump," it was his hard duty to die slowly, — renouncing all his cherished hopes of establishing a name as a scholar, as a theologian, as a historian of philosophy, in obedience to the demands of the duty nearest to him as a patriot and a Christian, and feeling his physical strength constantly decay with every exercise of it in his desperate contentions with those whom he considered the foes both of God and man.

A strong desire is expressed that an extended biography of him should be written, as a guide and stimulus to young men who are entering on the path of professional duty which he trod with such intrepidity and such usefulness. The suggestion is a good one. Still, if after reading King's Sermons and Lectures, anybody thinks the ordinary details of his daily life can add to the grand impressiveness of the soul revealed in *them*, he makes a mistake. The King whom

all his friends knew, — the brave, tender, and generous heart; the bright and fertile brain; the strong, aspiring soul, affirming the reality of life, and denying the reality of death, — this King we have in the two volumes where his mind and personality are embodied. More sermons, more lectures, should be published, — the more the better; but the real King is found in the books where his spirit is enshrined. There is not a noble sentence in the two volumes, now published, which King did not illustrate in his own life. What is the worth of details of housekeeping, and commonplace incidents which have no spiritual significance, in comparison with the grand Soul which shines through all these printed pages?

In conclusion, I may say that in dwelling on the memories of King's character and gifts I participate in the feeling of Shelley, in his monody on the death of Keats: —

> "The soul of Adonais, like a star,
> Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are."

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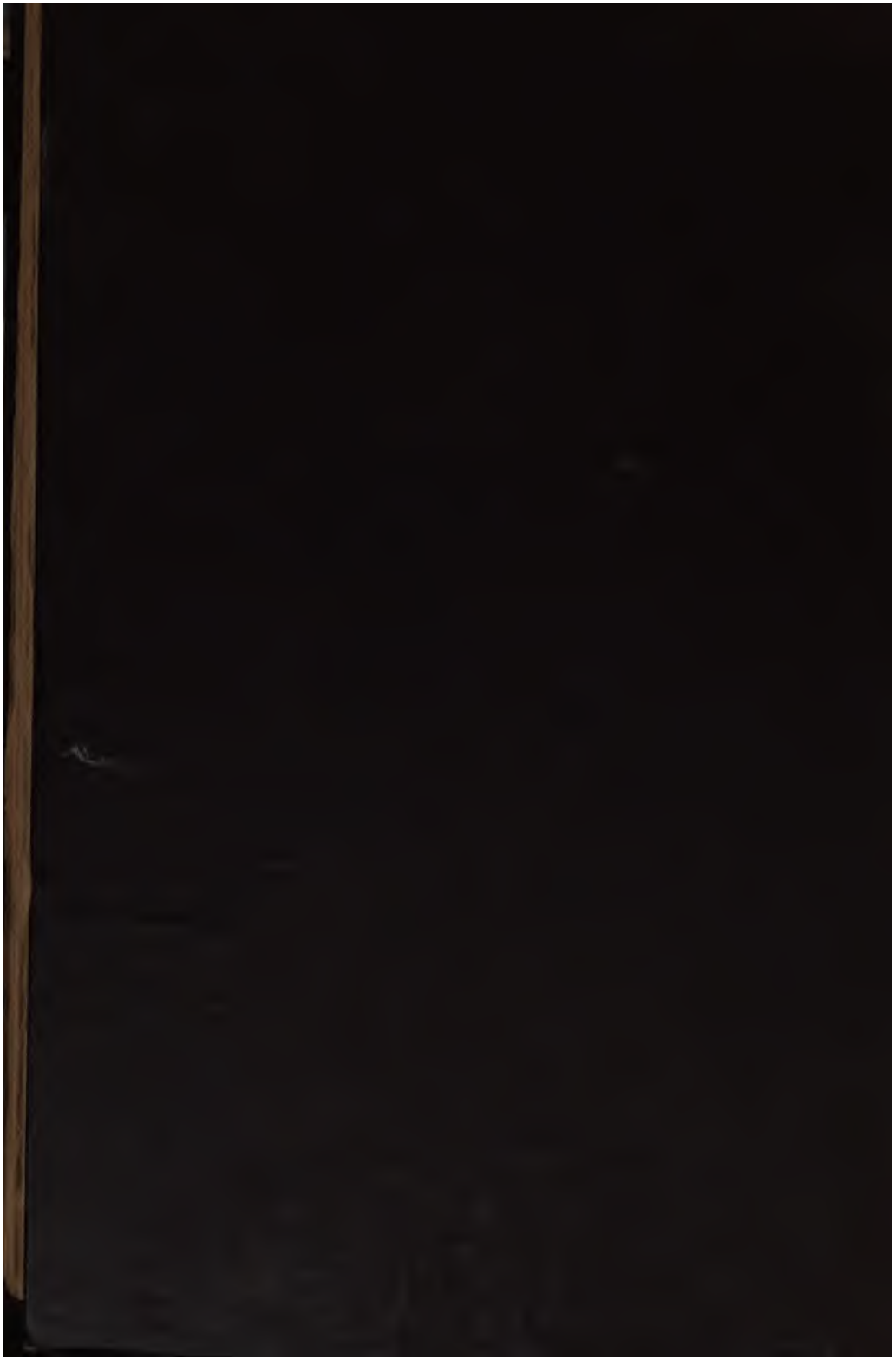
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